

JANUARY 29, 1926

No. 1061

FAME

Price 8 Cents

FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

DICK HADLEY'S MINE; OR THE BOY GOLD DIGGERS OF MEXICO.

A SELF-MADE MAN.

AND OTHER STORIES



Pepita stamped her foot angrily and uttered a shrill cry. Immediately Pedro Pacheco, gun in hand, followed by two other Mexicans, appeared over the brow of the eminence.

"Seize that boy!" cried the girl in Spanish, pointing at Dick.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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DICK HADLEY'S MINE

OR, THE BOY GOLD DIGGERS OF MEXICO

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Senorita Pepita Gonzales.

"I'm afraid we're in a bad fix, fellows," said Dick Hadley, as he stopped and looked around.

"Looks as if we're lost, for fair," remarked Sam Swift.

"That's what it does," chimed in Charley Ross.

Dick, Sam and Charley were three good-looking and uncommonly bright American boys. But it is a strange place we find them in on this hot July afternoon. They were on the soil of northern Mexico, in the western part of the State of Chihuahua, hundreds of miles away from their native stamping-grounds—good old New York, where they were born and brought up. Two weeks before, the high school they attended closed for the long summer vacation, and the three boys proceeded to carry out a plan already cut and dried between them. This was to join Sam Swift's father, who was a civil engineer and railroad contractor in Chihuahua, Mexico, where he was superintending the construction of a branch line of the Mexican Central, the most important railroad company in the republic. This branch was surveyed from the capital of the State westward into the Sierra Madre Range, and beyond. About fifty miles of the road had already been built, and it was proceeding as fast as circumstances would permit.

Work was going on through a break in the range when the boys arrived on the scene, after a few days of sightseeing in the city of Chihuahua. Mr. Swift was duly cognizant of their coming, and had prepared for their stay, the length of which, within the scope of their vacation, depended on themselves. After spending several days in the immediate vicinity of the railroad tracks, the boys began to make short excursions into the neighborhood. On the present occasion they had wandered into a rather romantic-looking defile which brought them out into a valley of some extent. As the afternoon was young, they had started northward up the valley, taking frequent rests under the shade of isolated trees along their route. After a couple of hours' rest they decided they had gone far enough, and began to retrace their steps. When they judged that they were approaching the defile, they began to keep a sharp lookout for it. They expected to have no difficulty in finding it, as they had care-

fully noted its general aspect before walking away from it. Although the defile was still in the same place, the boys failed to see when they came near it, and actually passed it without recognizing the landmarks they had taken note of. After walking half a mile to the southwest of it they began to grow uneasy. After spending another hour looking in vain for the defile, Dick Hadley, the most manly-looking of the three boys, made the remark with which our story opens.

"We must have passed the blamed old place," said Sam.

"Then we'd better go back and look more carefully," said Dick.

"I don't see how we could have missed it," growled Charley.

"Well, I do," replied Sam. "We have come across half a dozen blind breaks in the range that look exactly like the entrance to the ravine. If we're going to get out of here before dark we'll have to hustle."

"Nice kind of weather to hustle in," said Charley, mopping the perspiration from his forehead. "It's as hot as blue blazes."

"It's hot enough, all right," grinned Dick, who seemed the least affected by the sun, "but you must expect that in Mexico."

"I ain't kicking so much about the heat itself as at the idea of hustling," grunted Charley. "I simply can't hustle. I'm going to take a rest under this tree, if we never get out of the range."

"The trouble with you, Charley," said Sam, "is that you were born lazy."

"I deny it," protested Ross. "I'm no lazier than you are, but I've got more fat on my bones. I expect by the time we're ready to go home there'll be nothing but a grease spot left of me."

"Don't worry, Charley. You are getting yourself into condition for winter football. You'll be able to run a hundred yards in something like record time, which you've never been able to accomplish before. This Mexican trip will make a man of you," chuckled Sam.

"Say!—cut it out, will you? Your remarks make me weary!"

The boys fanned themselves with their hats, and finally stretched themselves out on the patch of green under the big tree. Fifteen minutes passed, and the sultriness of the air was making

the boys drowsy, when the tinkle, tinkle of a number of silvery-toned bells reached their ears.

"Hello! What's that?" exclaimed Dick, sitting up and looking in the direction of the sound.

Coming toward them, up the edge of the valley, were two burros. On the one in advance a dark, handsome Senorita, of about sixteen years, was perched with careless ease. On the burro behind her was mounted a long-limbed Mexican peon, in native attire.

"Gee! She's a beaut!" said Sam, with not a little interest in his tones.

"Yes, she's as pretty as a peach," said Dick. "I must stop them, and see if I can find out where we are at."

The girl observed the three boys under the tree, and looked at them with considerable curiosity. Dick got on his feet and walked over to head off the burros. The senorita, seeing that he wanted to address her, drew rein and waited for him to come up, and the peon behind also came to a stop.

"Good afternoon, miss," said Dick, raising his hat politely.

"Americano?" she replied, in silvery accents.

"Yes, we're Americans, all right," he answered.

"Do you speak English?"

"Muy poco; pero lo entiendo bastante," she replied in Spanish, which might be translated: "Very little; but I understand it pretty well."

However, her answer was pure Greek to Dick, and his countenance showed it.

"Ah, Senor, you not understand?" she said, with a captivating smile.

"Not a word," replied Dick, shaking his head.

Whether she understood his words or not, she easily guessed their meaning, and smiled again.

"What you do here, Senor?" she asked him.

"We have lost our way, miss," he replied.

"Si! You have lose yourselves? Where you come from?"

"Railroad," responded the boy, thinking she might understand the word.

Evidently she did, for she repeated the word and pointed south.

"We want to find the ravine that will take us out of this valley," said Dick.

The senorita, although she had claimed to understand English pretty well, did not seem to grasp his meaning.

"What is senor's name?" she asked.

"My name is Dick Hadley."

The girl repeated the name twice, and then said:

"My name Senorita Pepita Gonzales."

Dick bowed, and said he was pleased to make her acquaintance. She laughed gaily.

"The senor and"—she waved her arm at Dick's companions—"friends will come to mi padre's hacienda?"

Dick understood this to be an invitation to visit the home of her father. He decided to accept it, as anything was preferable to remaining where they were, with a dubious chance of getting out of the valley before dark. So he nodded his head.

"Come on, fellows! Fall in with the procession!" said Dick to his friends.

Sam and Charley rose to their feet.

"Is the young lady going to show us the way to the ravine?" asked Sam.

"No. She's given us an invitation to visit her home," replied Dick.

"Where does he live?"

"Blessed if I know; but we'll soon find out. Where is your padre's hacienda, senorita?" he asked the girl.

She waved her arm toward the other side of the valley.

"If we go over there we'll never get back to the railroad without a guide," said Sam. "And not before long after dark, anyway."

"Well, I don't see how we can help going with this young lady. She understands that we've lost our way, and that we came from the railroad, but I can't make her understand that we are looking for the ravine that leads out of the valley."

"Gee! It's tough to be lost in a land where a fellow has got to have an interpreter to make himself understood," growled Sam.

Dick brought his friends up to the senorita and presented them to her.

"Senorita Gonzales, this is my friend, Sam Swift."

The girl smiled sweetly and nodded. Dick went through the same ceremony with Charley Ross.

"Senor Dick Hadley, you will walk with me," said Pepita, with a look that showed she preferred his company.

She touched up her burro, and the party started across the valley, Dick walking by the girl's side, while Sam and Charley fell in behind between her and the mounted peon who acted as her attendant.

CHAPTER II.—At the Old Hacienda.

The senorita started to chat in a vivacious way with Dick, correcting herself when she lapsed into Spanish, as she frequently did, in moments of forgetfulness. The valley was not so very wide at this point, and the party came to a stop under a clump of trees among the foothills of the western spur of the range. Sam and Charley were glad of the chance to get out of the sun again, and they threw themselves upon the ground to take things easy. Dick did not desert the fair senorita's side, but remained talking with her. The peon dismounted from his burro and let the beast wander about, nibbling the grass, while he seated himself under a tree, rolled a cigarette, and began to smoke, in the indolent way characteristic of his race. The sun disappeared behind the range in the west, but that fact didn't make the air any less sultry.

"Dick seems to be stuck on Miss Gonzales," grinned Sam to Charley.

"Well, she seems to be mashed on him, too," replied Sam.

At that moment Pepita spoke to the peon in Spanish. Her attendant, whose name was Manuel, got up, caught and mounted his burro.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Dick. "Get a move on! We're going to start on!"

Sam and Charley obeyed rather reluctantly, for the shade of the trees suited them best. The procession followed a well-beaten track in among the foothills, and the valley was soon lost sight of. After a while they came to a long defile which wound in and out through the range, and finally landed them in another valley, much smaller than the one they had left, and full of vegetation and

trees. In the distance they saw a cluster of houses, chiefly built of cane, with sides not over four feet high, and roofs rising to an altitude of anywhere from ten to twenty feet. They were sometimes almost hidden amidst coffee bushes, tall mango trees, and plants covered with flowers of every hue. Towering above the houses rose the stone front of an ancient-looking church. It looked quite imposing from a distance, with its belfry rising above the entrance. The boys subsequently discovered that the church itself was but a miserable adobe edifice, roofed in with the same material with which the roofs of the cottages were composed. The stone front was merely a bluff to catch the eye, but in that respect did not greatly differ from hundreds of similar religious buildings scattered throughout Mexico, many of which are several hundred years old. Half a mile to the right was a long cactus grove, and toward it Pepita turned her burro.

"My father's hacienda," said the senorita, waving her hand toward the grove.

As they passed along the boys saw brown women busy with their household tasks, and brown children playing around the straggling cottages. Brown men were working in the coffee grove, and in the other fields, or driving burros laden with bags filled with some kind of produce. As they drew near the cactus grove one of the Mexican priests suddenly appeared from behind the singular-looking plants. He wore a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, much like those worn by old-fashioned Quakers, and a long black gown. His walk was slow and sedate. Pepita, who had been chattering like a magpie, oblivious of the fact that Dick could hardly keep track of the drift of her talk, became silent and demure the moment she caught sight of the reverend father. The padre made a slight motion with his hand as he passed, at the same time regarding Dick and his companions with a keen look, and Pepita and Manuel bowed their heads with deep respect.

They were now close to the grove. It was truly a formidable kind of wall that cut off the front view of the hacienda. The cactus bore a tree-like form, in which the thick stem sustained a head of branches, and reached between 30 and 40 feet from the ground. They were covered with thick, sharp spears, that were capable of inflicting an ugly wound on man or beast who monkeyed with them. A lane through the grove admitted the party into an open space beyond, where the boys saw the hacienda before them. It consisted of a long, low pile of buildings, bearing a faded and ancient appearance, as if they had been constructed in the time of the Flood, as Sam remarked to Charley. Before reaching the hacienda Pepita extended her hand to Dick and leaped lightly from her saddle. Manuel then took charge of the burro and led him off to one side.

"So this is where you live, senorita?" said Dick, gazing at the rambling structure.

"Si, Senor Dick. You may call me Pepita, if you wish," she said, with a languishing glance into his sunburned and manly face.

A swarthy-looking Mexican, close on to fifty years of age, came out of the main entrance, and Pepita introduced him to Dick as her father, and afterward to Sam and Charley. He welcomed the boys in a hospitable way, for he spoke good English, and invited them inside, where they were made acquainted with Senora Gonzales, a stout

little woman, somewhat resembling her daughter. Dick explained how they came to be in Mexico, as guests of Engineer Swift, who was building the Mexican Central branch, and how they had entered the long valley early that afternoon and couldn't get out again. Senor Gonzales smiled, and said he was glad his daughter had brought them to the hacienda, as it would give him much pleasure to offer them the freedom of his home for as long a time as they cared to stay.

"Oh, we'll have to get back as soon as possible," replied Dick, after thanking him for his generous offer, "for Mr. Swift has no idea where we are, and will be worried over our absence."

"Make yourselves easy on that score," said Senor Gonzales. "I will send one of my men right away to the place where the railroad is being built, to tell Senor Swift that you will remain here as my guests, for a week at least."

"A week!" exclaimed Dick. "Do you want us to stay so long as that?"

"You are welcome to remain a month, if you choose," replied the Mexican, in so hearty a tone that the lads were willing to believe that he was in earnest.

The boys found that, outside of the furniture, which was plain and substantial, there was little in the way of ornamentation to the rooms. The first meal they were treated to was supper, with a few extra dishes for their benefit, dinner being served in the middle of the day. After supper all hands adjourned to the best room in the house, the floor of which was covered by shiny white tiles. Here, again, Pepita managed to have Dick by her side. When the moon arose above the range the senorita enticed Dick for a walk in the courtyard, or garden, and, as far as actions could go, she made love to him. When the hour for retiring came around the three boys were shown to a large bedroom on the second floor, at the end of the hacienda nearest the village. A cot had been provided in addition to the bed, and Charley Ross elected to use it while Dick and Sam selected the bed. The boys, not feeling sleepy, sat by the open window, in the rays of the moonlight, talking about old times as well as the novelty of their present position.

CHAPTER III.—The Ghostly Bellringer.

The night was very quiet, not a sound of any kind breaking the stillness of the air. The villagers had gone to rest more than two hours before, and the family and servants of the hacienda were already asleep. As a matter of fact, there was hardly anyone awake but the three boys.

"Eleven o'clock," said Dick, after consulting his watch. "Let's turn in."

His suggestion was about to be followed when suddenly, through the calm air, rang out the clang! clang! of the bell in the belfry of the church.

"Hello!" exclaimed Sam. "That's the church bell! Do they have religious services at this hour?"

They stood by the window and listened to the sound, which was very irregular—sometimes a dozen strokes in rapid succession, then a pause of uncertain duration, after which the bell would toll slowly and mournfully, as if for a funeral.

"That's the oddest bell-ringing I ever listened to," said Charley Ross.

"I'd like to go over to the village and see what's going on," said Sam.

"So would I," answered Dick.

"I'd like to go, too. Couldn't we manage it some way?" said Charley. "There's a ladder standing over yonder. One of us could jump down into the yard and place that ladder under this window; then, when we got back, we could return to the room without any trouble."

The idea appealed to Sam and Dick, but the latter hesitated about adopting it, as he had doubts as to the propriety of their leaving the room in that fashion since they were guests of the house. Before the boys had decided whether to get out of the house or not, it became apparent to their ears that there was a commotion in and about the hacienda. Everybody in the house had been aroused from their sleep by the bell, and the boys could see a number of the servants running toward the cactus grove.

"Looks as if there might be something wrong," said Dick.

"Looks that way. Here comes Senor Gonzales. I'm going to ask him what is the matter," said Dick.

Accordingly he hailed the proprietor of the hacienda, and inquired what the bell was ringing for. Senor Gonzales answered that it was a mystery to him, but he was going to the village to inquire into the matter.

"May we go with you?" asked Dick.

Senor Gonzales said they could come, if they wanted to.

"We'll get out through this window. It's the quickest way," replied Dick.

One after another they dropped into the courtyard and joined the senor. When they reached the outside of the grove they found all the women servants gathered there, looking toward the church, which stood like a white specter in the moonlight. Already a considerable crowd of the villagers were gathered in front of the church looking up at the belfry. When Senor Gonzales and the boys reached the church they found the whole village assembled in the square in front of the building, looking up at the belfry in an awe-struck way. The padre was there, too, and he seemed as much rattled as the crowd behind him. The bell, which had been silent for a while, now commenced to peal solemnly forth once more, one clang at a time, with an interval between, like a dirge for the dead. Never within the memory of the oldest inhabitant had such a remarkable circumstance happened before, and all were fearful that it foreboded some great misfortune to the village. Every time the ghostly bellringer clanged the bell chills ran up and down the villagers' backs, and goose flesh rose on them.

While Senor Gonzales went to the padre and talked with him, the boys pushed their way to the front of the crowd and gazed up at the belfry, like the rest. Although they did not comprehend the situation fully, they could easily see that there was some mystery about the ringing of the bell.

"Let's go around to the rear of the building and see if we can get in and find out what the trouble is," suggested Dick.

His companions agreed to go around to the back

of the church, but were not quite sure that they wanted to enter the edifice. When they reached the door of the sacristy and found it locked, they came back by the other side. Dick walked up to the main entrance and tried the door. It was secure, all right. At that moment the bell clanged out again. In the meantime, Senor Gonzales had been trying to persuade the padre to unlock the front door. The priest finally mustered up courage enough to consent. He sent the sexton for a lantern. When that individual returned, with shaking steps, the priest walked up to the door, thrust the big iron key into the lock, and opened the door.

The padre entered the building slowly and cautiously, followed by Senor Gonzales, and the sexton, with the lighted lantern. The three boys took the liberty of following them, for they were eager to discover the solution of the mysterious bellringing, which they ascribed to some natural means. The padre opened a side door into a small room, where the bell-rope hung, and, taking the lantern from the trembling sexton's hand, flashed it in. The rope hung quite motionless, and the bell above was silent. A long ladder led upward through a hole in the ceiling. Suddenly the rope moved of itself, and the bell tolled out twice. The sexton uttered a yell of terror and fled. The padre uttered a gasp, and looked livid, while the lantern fell from his nerveless grasp. Dick stepped forward, picked up the lantern and entered the small room. Clearly no human being was there; yet the three boys had seen the rope shake and move up and down.

"Whoever is ringing the bell is concealed in the loft or in the belfry," said Dick to Sam, who had followed him in. "I dare you to accompany me up there."

He put his foot on the first round and started up. Sam, ashamed to let him go alone, followed on behind. Charley concluded to be one of the procession, too. Up the three went, without hindrance from the padre or the senor, who watched them disappear through the opening into the loft. When Dick poked the lantern, and then his head, through the hole into the new loft, he saw at a glance that it was quite empty.

"There's no one in this place," he said to Sam. "The intruder must be hiding in the belfry."

He stepped into the loft and waited till his companions joined him. A short flight of steps pointed the way to the open belfry above. Dick laid hold of the hanging bell-rope. As he did so he felt it shiver in his grasp several times. Suddenly it was pulled upward a bit, then it slipped back, and the bell tolled. Dick immediately sprang up the steps, holding the lantern in front of him. As his head and shoulders rose in the belfry something white, armed with claws, flew at the lantern, and the bell tolled again. Dick was startled, and fell back against Sam. The latter lost his balance, and toppled over upon Charley, and with a crash the three boys landed on the floor of the loft in a heap. The noise reached the padre and Senor Gonzales, below, and they looked upward in anxious suspense. They probably expected to see the three venturesome boys come tumbling down the ladder, but if so, they were disappointed.

"What did you upset me for?" growled Sam to Dick. "What did you see?"

"Something white flew at me," replied Dick.

"Something white?" said Sam. "Did it look like a ghost?"

"A ghost! Nonsense! Whatever it was, it hit the lantern a whack that made the glass rattle. I'm going back to see what it is," said Dick resolutely.

This time he did not rush up the steps, but made his way to the belfry, with some caution. When he poked the lantern and his head into the place nothing happened. The belfry was perfectly still, and lit up the rays of the moon. Dick glanced at the bell, and then he saw a white object hanging to a loose strand of the bell-rope. It looked to be about two feet long, and it dangled from the rope like a wet rag. The boy flashed the light on it, and saw that it was a huge condor. The bird had been caught by the strand of rope, frayed by long years of use. The strand was strong enough to hold the great bird captive, and in its struggles to free itself it had rung the bell. The condor was quite dead now. In its attack on the lantern it had burst a blood-vessel. Dick laughed when he saw the explanation of the mystery before him, and called to Sam and Charley to come up and see the spook that had rung the bell. They came, and were astonished at the sight of the huge dead bird.

"So this is the mysterious bellringer?" said Sam, as they examined the defunct bird with much interest.

"That's right," replied Dick. "He was a powerful bird. Look at his wings and huge claws. Every time he made an effort to fly he pulled the bell-rope down and clanged the bell. When I came up here he was at his last gasp, but he had strength enough left to make one final spring at the lantern."

"Better have the padre come up here and look at him, before you cut him down, so he can explain to the villagers that the bell was not rung by supernatural agency," advised Sam.

Dick agreed to that, and Charley was sent downstairs to tell Senor Gonzales and the padre to come up. Charley's story, translated to the priest by Senor Gonzales, inspired the padre with courage enough to venture up into the belfry with the hacienda proprietor. The sight of the dead condor's predicament satisfied the priest. He consented to Dick taking possession of the bird as a reward for his courage. The party then returned to the ground, Dick bearing his prize in triumph, which, at the padre's request, he exhibited to the villagers, who crowded around him to gaze upon it. Senor Gonzales and the boys then returned to the hacienda.

CHAPTER IV.—A Strange Cry for Help.

Pepita and her mother were up, and waiting to hear the news from the village, when they got back to the house. Senor Gonzales told the whole story in Spanish to his wife and daughter, and the girl and her mother looked at Dick with considerable admiration, for he was regarded as the hero of the affair. When Dick and his friends returned to their room they carried the condor with them.

"He's a dandy bird," Dick said. "Senor Gon-

zales says Manuel is something of a taxidermist, and will stuff him in good style for me. Get hold of that wing, Sam, and we'll see how big he is, spread out."

Sam grasped the bird, and they spread his wings to their fullest extent.

"Helló!" exclaimed Dick. "What's this? There's a paper tied under this wing!"

"Somebody must have attached that paper to his wing for a purpose," said Sam.

"Probably it's a joke," replied Dick.

He got out his knife and cut the paper free. Then he opened it and looked at it. It contained words written in an uncertain kind of way, which Dick saw were English, and he proceeded to try and decipher the strange message. This was what he finally made out:

"Help! I am alone, and dying, in the heart of the western spur of the Sierra Madre, about 100 miles north from the course of the new railroad line. If this should reach a friendly eye, I beg that person to come to me without loss of time, and he shall not regret it, for I have the means of rewarding him generously. It is one chance in a thousand I am taking, in intrusting this message to a wild condor, but perhaps a kindly Providence will guide him in the right direction, and I may then see a human being once more before I die.
John Carden."

Dick was astonished at the contents of the note, which appeared to be of the most urgent character. He immediately read it out to his companions.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"Looks as if the writer was in a pretty bad fix somewhere in the mountains," said Sam. "He wants help at once. It's a question how long ago this was written."

"It's a strange kind of a way to send such a note out, tied under the wing of a wild condor," said Charley. "Doesn't look as if there'd be one chance in a million of anybody getting it."

"The one chance in the million has materialized," said Dick, "for the note has come into my hands."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Sam.

"Nothing tonight. In the morning I'll show it to Senor Gonzales, and see what he says about it. He is probably familiar with the range, and may be able to locate the spot where this John Carden is. We can organize an expedition for the man's relief. It will be quite an adventure for the three of us."

"It will suit me, all right," said Sam eagerly.

"And me, too," chimed in Charley.

The condor was set aside, the important note put carefully away in Dick's wallet, and then they turned in for the night, and were soon asleep. Breakfast was on the table, waiting for them, when they walked downstairs next morning. Pepita had been dreaming about Dick all night, and she welcomed him with a warmth that somewhat embarrassed while it flattered him. After the meal the girl wanted to take Dick off with her somewhere, but he asked to be excused, as he had business with her father. Dick showed John Carden's letter to Senor Gonzales, and told him how he had found it under the wing of the dead con-

dor. The senor could not make the writing out very well, so Dick read it to him.

"Looks like a serious matter, doesn't it?" said the boy.

Senor Gonzales admitted that it had that look.

"Where is the western spur of the range?" asked Dick.

The Mexican told him that the writer of the note probably referred to a certain spur of the mountain which projected from the western line of the Sierra Madre. He knew of such a spur about ninety miles to the north of the hacienda.

"That must be the place, then," said Dick. "Don't you think we had better get up a small expedition and go to this man's assistance?"

Senor Gonzales considered a moment, and then said he would send his overseer and another man to hunt Carden up, and see what help he needed.

"We want to go along, too," said Dick.

"It would be a rough journey for you through the mountains," said the senor. "I don't think you would like it."

Dick insisted that he and his friends would like it first rate.

"We came to Mexico to see all we could of the country," he added, "and such a chance to explore the Sierra Madre Range we don't want to miss."

Senor Gonzales shrugged his shoulders, and said they could go if they wanted to.

"I will instruct Pedro to look out for you," he said.

Then he sent for his overseer, whom he introduced to the boys as Pedro Pacheco. He translated the gist of John Carden's letter to him, and said he was to make an effort to find the man. Preparations were made at once for starting on the journey. As soon as Pepita heard of the proposed expedition she tried to persuade Dick to remain at the hacienda with her and let his friends accompany Pedro. Dick couldn't see it that way. Pepita and the hacienda were all right when there was nothing more exciting on the program, but the girl's influence was not strong enough to make a slave of him. Half an hour after the meal was over Dick and his friends bade Pepita and her father and mother a temporary good-by, got astride of the burros provided for them by the owner of the hacienda, and followed Pedro Pacheco and a peon, who were similarly mounted, up through a pocket of the little valley, toward the rise of the Sierra Madre Range.

CHAPTER V.—Searching for John Carden.

They were soon in the mountains, the trail leading upward through wild and picturesque ravines, by the side of turbulent streams that flowed over rocky beds, passing under a cascade that looked like a sheet of shimmering glass, and anon skirting some projecting promontory by a narrow and venturesome path, where a misstep by one of the burros would have pitched his rider to certain death, hundreds of feet below.

"That's enough to give a fellow the nightmare," said Sam, who was riding behind Dick, for they were proceeding in single file, as they circled one of the promontories mentioned. "S'pose one of our burros stumbled anywhere along that place—just think what would happen!"

"Don't lose your nerve, Sam," said Dick, over

his shoulder. "You may need it all before we reach the spur we're going to."

"I'll bet your nerves tingled just now when we were on that narrow path," retorted Sam. "I can stand as much as you."

"How did Charley get through the trip?"

"Blessed if I know. I haven't heard a squeal out of him. I guess he kept his eyes shut so he wouldn't get rattled." The trail they were following was perfectly familiar to Pedro, who had often been over it, and he thought nothing of its perils, nor even of its beauties. They had ascended to a considerable elevation, and had covered many miles from the hacienda, when the sky took on a peculiar look.

"Looks as if we were going to be caught in a storm," Dick said to Sam, who was close behind him.

"That's what it does, and I don't fancy the idea of it. There seems to be thunder and lightning in those clouds. It would be fierce to be caught in such a storm up here, where there seems to be no shelter of any kind," replied Sam. Fifteen minutes later the clouds had mounted as far as the zenith, and the boys heard the rumbling of the thunder quite clearly, and saw the opaque masses streaked here and there with zigzag flashes of electricity. The worst feature of the approaching storm seemed to be the wind it was bringing with it. Judging from the speed of the clouds, it was evidently a high velocity.

To be caught in such a wind where they were, was one of the most perilous features of mountain traveling, for it was liable to sweep them, burros and all, down the slope that lay on one side of them. None knew this fact better than Pedro, and he was aiming for a certain cavern, where he intended to halt for the evening meal and pass the night. The storm was swooping down upon the party when a turn in the trail brought them in sight of the cavern, that looked like a black hole in the mountain side. The howling and shrieking of the onrushing wind was in the ears of the boys as Pedro dismounted from his burro outside the cave, and ordered the others to enter.

Two minutes later it seemed to the boys as if all nature had broken loose and was whooping things up like a party of cowboys on a rampage. While the storm was at its height Pedro produced some of the provisions they had brought with them, and with a lantern to partially illuminate the back of the cave, they made a satisfactory meal. The storm was over in about two hours, and when the sky cleared and the moon rose over the summit of the eastern range, the party spread blankets on the stony floor of the cavern and turned in for the night. At the first blush of daylight Pedro aroused the boys, who found breakfast waiting for them. No time was lost in resuming the journey, as it was desirable to cover as much ground as possible in the cool of the early morning.

Travel that day was much easier than during the preceding afternoon, and they met with no particularly dangerous places. When night overtook them once more they were within sight of the western spur alluded to in the appealing letter of John Carden. They reached the spur the next day, about noon, and then began the search for the particular spot where the man was presumed to be, either dead or alive. Many dif-

ficulties were now encountered. Pedro had never been through this spur, and he had to feel his way.

"What do you suppose brought Carden out to such a Lord-forsaken place as these mountains?" asked Sam.

"I suppose he is a prospector, hunting for gold and silver," replied Dick.

"I should think that was a mighty risky and uncertain business," interjected Charley.

"It's a paying business if you make a lucky strike," said Dick. The party stopped for rest and dinner at a shady grove on the side of the mountain. A fire was built and some coffee prepared. A number of potatoes were baked in their jackets, in the hot ashes, and this, with cold meat and a supply of fruit, constituted their *al fresco* meal. Pedro and the peon rolled cigarettes and lighted them, while the boys stretched themselves out on a patch of soft turf. An hour passed and then Dick awoke from a cat nap. His companions were asleep; so, also, were Pedro and the brown man.

"I guess I'll take a look around and see what I can see," said Dick to himself.

He got up, lazily stretched himself, and walked off. A hundred yards took him out of sight of his sleeping companions, and then he found himself quite alone. No matter where he looked, whether to the right or left, front, or back, or downward, there was nothing to be seen but Nature, in her most lonesome garb. Rocks, trees, shrubs, and mountainous elevations, there were a-plenty, but a house, or even the rudest kind of shack, was not to be seen. There wasn't even an animal or bird of any kind, much less the figure of a man. He stepped out to the edge of a narrow promontory, on which grew a lone tree, the better to look down into a gully that ran at an acute angle toward a deep break in the mountains. As he grasped the trunk of the tree and leaned forward the ground suddenly caved from under him, and he felt himself falling. He uttered an involuntary cry of terror, and threw both arms around the tree to save himself.

As his weight came upon the tree its roots began to yield, for they had been undermined by years of rainstorms. Dick struggled desperately to regain a footing on the top of the promontory again. The more he exerted himself the lower the tree bent and shivered. Had the excited boy been a bit cooler he might have avoided the catastrophe which followed. But he bent all his energies on the tree, like a drowning man grasping at a small and unsubstantial board. The result was the tree could not stand the strain, and gave way, carrying Dick down with it into the gully. His voice ran out shrill and clear on the still air, and reached the ears of Pedro, who had just awakened from his siesta. But owing to the way the rocks deflected the sound, it seemed to come from a different direction to what it really did. The Mexican sprang to his feet and listened, but the cry was not repeated. Then he glanced over where the boys lay, and saw that Dick Hadley was missing.

CHAPTER VI.—John Carden's Heir.

Fortunately for Dick, the tree swung around, and fell under instead of on top of him; and the branches helped, in a large way, to break his fall

on striking the inclined gully. The shock, however, dazed him, but did not shake off his convulsive hold on the trunk. The tree slid down the smooth side of the gully as if it was in a chute, and the half-unconscious boy went with it, clinging to it desperately, like some wild animal to its prey. The gully wound its circuitous way around the mountain side, and the tree and boy followed its course. At some points it was so steep that the tree attained considerable speed, which carried it over level places on its route.

In this way Dick was borne a long distance down the mountain, until at last the gully ended a short distance behind a good-sized log house which was perched upon a low section of the range. There were signs of much broken ground near it, and a hole of some little depth. These excavations had evidently been made by the hand of a man, for the earth was thrown up in heaps about them. The tree slid out of the gully on to level ground and came to rest. It was several moments before Dick seemed to be conscious that he was no longer railroading it down the mountain side. Finally he let go of the tree and sat up.

"Gee! I wonder where I am?" he asked himself, as he began to look around. "It seems to me, after that fall, I had a mighty long slide down the mountain. I wonder how far I could have come? I'm afraid I'll never be able to find my way back to where I started from, in which case I'll be in a bad pickle. Pedro and the others may never be able to find me, and I stand a good chance of starving to death out here in the wilderness. That's a fierce prospect. However, there is no use of moping over it. I must be up and doing. I ought to be truly thankful that I am not injured in any way. If I had got a leg broken, or internal injuries, it would have been all up with me, for fair, but as nothing seems to be the matter with me, as far as I can see, I have a fighting chance to get out of my hole."

Dick was a plucky chap, and never allowed himself to be cast down by adverse circumstances. He got on his feet, and then the first thing his eyes rested on was the house. Much to his astonishment, a small American flag was waving in the breeze from a pole at the other end of the building. It looked rusty and weather-stained, as if it had been there some time.

"I guess I've lighted on my feet, after all!" ejaculated the boy, with a thrill of hope. "A house, especially one with a flag flying from it, looks like the presence of civilization. An American flag, too!—means that one or more of my own countrymen are here. I shall have no trouble in explaining my situation, and will get food and shelter. This is certainly great luck."

Dick started toward the house. Then he saw the piles of dirt, and the holes, with a shovel and a pickaxe thrown carelessly into one of them.

"These people are miners, that is clear. Perhaps they know something about John Carden."

As Dick uttered the man's name he stepped short, as if an idea had struck him.

"Maybe this is John Carden's stamping-ground, and I shall find him in the cabin," he said. "It must be so. As Pedro and the rest of our party are so near, they will probably find this spot before long, and everything will be all right."

As Dick looked more carefully around, the si-

lence and general air of desolation began to impress him with the idea that if this was Carden's habitation he was either dead, or had so far recovered as to strike out for help on his own account. Dick walked around to the front of the house. The door stood slightly ajar. The possibility that he might find a corpse inside was so unpleasant that for several moments he hesitated to enter the cabin. At length he mustered up courage to do so. The building consisted of one room only. It was quite bare of any real furniture. There was a rude kind of home-made table near the center of the room, beside which stood part of a thick log that had evidently been used for a stool.

A wide fireplace, built of stones, cemented with clay or mud, with a chimney of the same material, stood at the back of the cabin. A charred log and a lot of partially burned tree limbs lay in it, amid a pile of dead ashes. A heap of what appeared to be rock lay piled against one corner. In the opposite corner was a rude couch, covered with blankets, and on the blankets lay the form of a man. As far as Dick could judge, as he stood at the open door, the man was either in a deep sleep or dead.

"That must be John Carden," thought Dick, "and it looks as if the poor fellow was indeed dead. Well, I must make sure of it. It is possible he may still have some life in him."

He advanced slowly toward the couch. As he drew near, he saw the man's hand move, and then his head, which was turned toward the wall, moved also.

"He is not dead," breathed Dick, thankfully. "I have arrived here in time to be of some assistance to him."

He reached the couch and looked down on the prostrate man. The man turned his eyes up at him and essayed to speak, but the words died away in a whisper.

"Are you John Carden?" Dick asked him.

The man feebly nodded his head.

"You sent a letter for help, tied under the wing of a wild condor. I got the bird, read your note, and induced the proprietor of the hacienda where I and two friends of mine were stopping to send out a search party to find you. I came with the party, which is now somewhere near the summit of the range, within a mile or two of this spot."

Carden raised his hand and pointed to a shelf on which stood a demijohn. Dick saw that he wanted it, and hastened to take it down. He removed the stopper, and the odor told him that it contained whisky. There was an overturned tin cup on the floor beside the bed. Dick picked it up, half filled it with whisky, and poured some of it down Carden's throat. It greatly revived him.

"Thank you, my boy," he said, gratefully, in a tone loud enough for Dick to hear.

"How long have you been ill?" Dick asked.

"About three weeks," Carden replied, "but I managed to keep on my feet until the day before yesterday, when I gave in completely. Nothing has passed my lips in forty-eight hours."

"If there is anything in the house I can cook or prepare for you, let me know," said Dick.

"There are some canned goods on yonder shelf which may be of use to you and your friends, but I am past eating. I have only a few hours

to live, at the outside, and shall want nothing but an occasional sup of whisky to keep my strength up to the last."

"You may not be as bad as you think," replied Dick, trying to encourage him.

"There is no hope for me at all. I am as good as a dead man. But it is a satisfaction to me that some one has reached me before I died. Bring that log up and sit down. I want to talk to you."

Dick did as he requested.

"My name is John Carden. I hail from Sackville, New York State. I am a prospector and mining man. I came into these mountains six months ago, to follow up a clue I got from an old peon. With my knowledge of ore outcroppings I succeeded in spotting a rich golden lode. I staked it out according to the laws of Mexico, and took title to the richest part of this property on which this cabin stands. Give me another drink, my lad. I feel faint."

Dick poured more whisky into the cup and put it to his lips. His voice at once grew stronger and his eyes brighter.

"The documents attesting my rights, and fully defining the area of the ground, are filed in the proper office at Chihuahua, and no one can legally deprive me of the fruits of my discovery. Death, however, has a claim that no man can evade, and the gold that I expected to possess can never be mine now. Another drink, boy."

Dick supplied him with it.

"What is your name, my lad? You are an American, I believe."

"My name is Dick Hadley. I am an American, for I was born in New York City, and my home is there. I am spending my vacation down around the railroad with two of my friends and schoolmates. The father of one of them is the engineer who is building the new branch line of the Mexican Central. We were at a hacienda among the foothills of the Sierra Madre, spending a few days, when your letter asking for help came into my hands in the most wonderful way."

Dick, in as few words as possible, rehearsed the fate that had overtaken the condor that carried the prospector's note, and how he had got possession of the bird.

"It was the will of Heaven that I should not die utterly alone in the wilderness," said Carden.

Dick then explained how the party had set out for that section of the Sierra Madre two days since, and how he had come to meet with the accident that resulted in his appearance on the spot all by himself.

"You had a remarkable escape from death," said the prospector, "but it looks as if the hand of Providence had guided you here before I died. I shall probably be dead before your companions reach this place, so what I have to do must be done now and through you. This mining property is easily worth a million or more money. The only heir I have is a nephew, who is a great scamp, and I have no wish that this discovery should revert to him. The only way I can avoid his ultimately getting possession of it is to deed it over to somebody else. The last time I was in Chihuahua I had a presentiment that something might happen to me, and to guard against my property going to my nephew I had a deed legally drawn up transferring all my rights in this property to any one I might deem worthy

of the gift. I signed it in the presence of a notary, leaving the name of the recipient blank, to be filled in subsequently, if circumstances rendered such a course necessary. That paper is with the copies of my other papers, in those saddlebags at the foot of my couch. Go to the bag, my lad, and get it out, with a fountain-pen you will also find there, and I will insert your name in the paper, and this property will then become legally yours after you have filed the document in Chihuahua."

"Do you mean to say that you actually intend making me a present of this gold mine you have discovered?" cried Dick in astonishment.

"I do. Lose no time, but get the paper, so I can put your name in it, for I am growing much weaker, and soon I will be unable to hold the pen."

Dick, almost dazed by his great luck, hunted for the indicated document.

As soon as he found it, and got the stylographic penholder, he propped Carden up, and the prospector wrote Dick's name in the blank space with a trembling hand, but sufficiently clear to avoid any error.

"There!—the mine is your property—Dick Hadley's mine from this out, and no longer John Carden's. I congratulate you, my lad, on the acquisition of such a valuable property. Heaven meant you should have it, or you had not been guided here in such a wonderful way."

Dick expressed his gratitude for the favor which the dying man had bestowed on him.

"You are welcome to it, my boy. My message sent by the condor came into your hands in a way that assures me that you were selected to be my heir, and I have merely carried out the will of a Supreme Intelligence who doubtless knows that you will make good use of the money this mine will ultimately yield you."

After disposing of his mining property John Carden grew weaker as the moments passed, and after the lapse of an hour Dick saw that he could not live much longer. The whisky ceased to have much of a reviving effect upon him, for his vitality was now at a low ebb. Finally he became unconscious, and Dick left his side and went to the door to look out, in a faint hope that he might see the rest of his own party somewhere in the neighborhood, looking for him. As he stood there, looking down the slope, the sun vanished behind the distant mountain tops, and as it disappeared the breath left the body of John Carden.

CHAPTER VII.—Trouble.

"It's over five hours since I fell down that gully," thought Dick. "I think it is about time Pedro and the others made some progress toward finding me. It isn't the pleasantest thing in the world to have to remain all alone with a dead man in this lonesome spot, even if the dead man has made your fortune for you. Death is something that I don't like to be on close acquaintanceship with. It gives one a creepy feeling to watch over a corpse alone in a room in the midst of a busy city. It's a hundred times worse to perform the same duty out here in the silent wilds. It will soon be dark now, and unless my

party shows up pretty soon I'll have to give up all hope of seeing any of them till to-morrow."

At that moment an idea struck Dick. If his friends failed to show up before dark he would build a bonfire to try and attract their attention. With this idea in his head, the boy began to gather a pile of dry brush and branches of trees. When the heap was ready for lighting he kept on at the work till he had secured a considerable extra supply of material to keep the fire going for a couple of hours. By the time he had finished his labors he began to feel the gnawings of a healthy appetite, so he entered the cabin and inspected the supply of canned provisions the dead man had not used. They were all American brands of preserved meats and vegetables, which Carden had bought in Chihuahua and brought out to his mine.

Dick selected a small tin of boned chicken, a couple of handfuls of crackers, and, taking the tin cup, went outside to where a stream of pure water flowed down the rocks. There he sat on the ground and made a hearty meal of the provender. By the time he had finished the darkness of night fell on the face of the landscape. He lighted a lantern he found in the cabin and then started his bonfire. The flames, after they got well started, leaped heavenward in a way that could not escape notice for miles around. As the fire languished he fed it afresh, and kept up the work until the last of his reserve fuel was exhausted.

Then he gathered some more, determined to make a strong bid for the attention of his friends, if they were anywhere within sight of the blaze. He kept at his self-imposed work until he grew weary, and laid down under a tree to seek repose for the night. He was half asleep when he heard sounds as of persons approaching. Sitting up, he looked around. Four figures, mounted on burros, the last one leading a fifth animal, suddenly appeared out of the gloom close by. Although Dick could not see them very distinctly, he guessed they were Pedro, the peon, and his two friends. He sprang to his feet and rushed forward into the dying glare of the fire so they could see him. Instantly he heard a shout from Sam and Charley.

"Hello, Dick!" they cried, springing from their burros and running up to him.

"Hello, chappies!" replied Dick joyfully. "I'm mighty glad to see you again!"

"How the dickens did you get here, Dick?" asked Sam. "We thought you had tumbled down the other side of the mountain, and we've been looking for you all the afternoon."

"You'r never guess how I did get here, nor what I found when I reached the place."

"Tell us all about it," said Charley eagerly.

Here Pedro came up and shook hands with him, saying something in Spanish which neither Dick nor his friends understood. Dick then told how he had fallen from the top of the promontory into the gully, and how the tree had borne him down the mountainside. His friends thought he had had a pretty strenuous experience.

"This is the place we've been hunting for, fellows," concluded Dick.

"You mean John Carden's hangout?" said Sam.

"Yes."

"And where is Carden?"

"Dead."

"Dead!" repeated Sam. "Then we have arrived too late to be of any use to him."

"You have; but I got here before he died."

"Then he hasn't been dead long?"

"About four hours. He died shortly before sundown."

"Where is he—in the cabin?"

"Yes."

Dick managed to explain the situation to Pedro, and the entire party entered the house to look at the dead man. Afterward Dick took Sam and Charley aside and told them about the mine and how it had come into his possession.

"Gee whiz! So you're actually the owner of this gold mine?" cried Sam, staring almost incredulously at Dick.

"That's what I am."

"How much do you think it's worth?"

"Carden said that it was easily worth a million."

"A million!" gurgled Charley. "And it's all yours?"

"Every bit of it."

"Well, talk about blind luck!" cried Sam. "You've fallen into the butter tub head over heels. Going to sell it, I suppose?"

"I don't know what I'm going to do with it. I must see your father about it. He will be able to advise me what to do."

"Where's the gold Carden took out of it? He must have got some."

"There's a big pile of quartz-rock in the corner of the cabin, and one of Carden's saddle-bags is full of small nuggets of pure gold," replied Dick.

"Couldn't you let Charley and I do some digging on our own account, just to pay our expenses down here?" asked Sam eagerly.

"Sure! I intended to give you a chance to make \$50,000 or \$100,000 apiece. I am not a hog, to want to keep it all to myself, even if it does belong to me," answered Dick heartily.

"You're a brick, old man! You won't miss what we get away with."

"We'll stay here a few days and work the mine, and see how it pans out; then we will go to Chihuahua and I will file my claim to the mine, so I shall have no trouble about holding on to it," said Dick.

"How about Pedro and his side partner?" said Sam. "After we bury Carden tomorrow they'll probably want to return to the hacienda right away. As soon as Pedro discovers that there is gold here he may put in a claim for a share of it."

"His claim won't count for anything. However, I'm willing to give him some of the gold ore to keep him from making any trouble for me."

The boys talked a while longer about the mine and then returned to the cabin, where they found Pedro and his companion already asleep on the floor. They followed the example of the Mexicans, and did not awaken until they were aroused in the morning by the overseer, who told them breakfast was ready. After the meal Pedro went nosing about the place. He looked into the big hole dug by the dead prospector and afterward examined the specimens of ore in the cabin. He was about to investigate the contents of the saddle-bags, when Dick interfered, and told him that

the dead man had given him all his property before he died.

The Mexican grinned unpleasantly and walked off. He returned with the peon, and pointing to some empty bags, told the native to fill them with the gold ore in the corner. Dick said nothing till Pedro told the peon to take the bags outside; then he told the Mexican that the ore was his property, and that he would make him a present of one of the bags, but no more. Pedro regarded him with an ugly look and ordered the peon to proceed. Dick called Sam and Charley to his side, and told Pedro plainly enough that he would report him to Senor Gonzales if he didn't leave all but a single bag of the ore alone. Pedro half drew an ugly-looking knife from his belt, but after a moment's reflection turned his back on the boys and went outside, calling the peon with him. The two retired to a short distance and had a talk.

"Looks as if we're likely to have trouble with the overseer," said Sam apprehensively.

Dick thought so, too. As they were unarmed, and both Mexicans had knives, it looked as if the latter possessed a decided advantage over them.

"If we only had a revolver or rifle now, we could stand them off, in case it came to a scrap," said Sam. "Didn't Carden have any weapons?"

"I don't know," replied Dick.

"Let's look and see, while those chaps are outside," suggested Charley.

They took up the saddle-bags, and found a holster with a brace of loaded revolvers in them.

"Now we're safe," said Sam, as he lifted the holster up.

"Here's a gun," said Charley, pulling a magazine rifle of American make from under the bed, together with a cartridge belt fully supplied with cartridges.

Dick took possession of the rifle and the other boys put a revolver apiece in their belts.

"Now we are in a position to defend the ore," said Sam. "Mr. Pedro will have to take a back seat."

At this moment Pedro and the peon returned to the cabin. The Mexican looked primed for business. He gave Dick to understand that he claimed the ore and was going to take it. Dick denied his right to it. Pedro grinned in a sinister way and tapped his knife. Dick then picked up the rifle, whereupon the Mexican started back with an ugly frown. For a moment the opposing sides appeared to be at a deadlock.

"I settle for half," said Pedro at length.

"No," replied Dick. "I'll give you two bags of ore and call it square."

The Mexican was not inclined to accept that kind of promise. He began to threaten Dick in Spanish. Although the boys did not understand his words, they easily understood his meaning. Dick showed by his plucky demeanor that he did not propose to be bulldozed. Finding that he was making no headway, Pedro went outside again with the peon, and they held another consultation. Pedro then returned and demanded four bags, one of them for the peon. Dick said he could have three, but that was the limit. The Mexican seemed to give in, and ordered his comrades to remove three of the bags.

"We come back presently and help bury man,"

said Pedro, as the peon carried out the last of the three bags.

Dick nodded, and the boys began to converse together as to their future plans.

"I wonder what's keeping those chaps so long," said Dick, at length. "Let's go out and see."

The boys walked outside and discovered that Pedro, the peon, and the five burros had vanished.

CHAPTER VIII.—A Jealous Beauty.

"Looks as if they'd skipped out and left us to shift for ourselves," said Dick.

"And taken the burros with them!" ejaculated Sam.

"With the provisions!" gasped Charley. "We'll starve!"

"No, we won't starve," replied Dick. "There is a supply of canned goods in the cabin."

"Is there?" replied Charley, much relieved.

"Well, let them go. We won't miss them," said Dick. "When Pedro gets back to the hacienda without us he'll have to give an explanation to Senor Gonzales. I guess he'll find out that he's up against it."

"He'll say we got lost somewhere in the mountains," said Sam. "That he hunted for us and couldn't find us."

"Then the senor will bring a party out to hunt us up. He'll consider himself responsible for our safety, for we are his guests. He notified your father that we were going to remain at his place for a week or two," said Dick.

Sam and Charley immediately recovered their spirits.

"We can have a dandy time camping out here by ourselves till Senor Gonzales comes after us," remarked Sam.

"We can put in our time digging for gold," interjected Charley enthusiastically.

"The first thing we've got to do is to bury John Carden," said Dick.

"Let's do that right away," said Charley.

"No, we won't do it till sundown," answered Dick. "We can make our preparations, however. We've got to dig the grave in a suitable spot, and we ought to make some kind of a coffin to put him in. There may be enough boards in the bunk to answer that purpose. Let's hunt up a burial spot first—some place where he is not likely to be disturbed. Up the mountain, for instance, under the trees."

They ascended the mountain behind the cabin, and finally found a place that appeared to be just right for the solemn purpose. With the pickaxe and shovel which they had brought along they dug a hole six feet in length, two and one-half feet wide, and about five feet deep. Then they returned to the cabin.

Carden was lifted from the bunk and placed on the floor. Dick found a hatchet and a can of nails. He knocked the bunk to pieces and found it would afford boards enough to make a suitable box for the corpse. In half an hour the coffin was ready. It was lined with a blanket after a rest had been put in to hold up the dead prospector's head. Carden, who was as rigid as a board now, was lifted in. A large stone was then brought in and

one end of the box placed upon it, while the other end rested on the log of wood which the dead man had used for a chair.

"We'll let him lie in state now till sundown," said Dick.

The boys then went outside and inspected the hole out of which Carden had dug his quartz. Afterward they found that the prospector had secured his nuggets and gold dust out of the bed of a stream below. The pan he had used to wash out the pay "dirt" was found standing against a tree with a few glittering specks still showing in the small quantity of sand that remained in it.

Sam and Charley were so anxious to get to work digging for gold quartz that they started in as soon as the property had been looked over, and Dick contented himself sitting under a tree and watching them perspire at the laborious job. The two boys took turns in the hole, and each succeeded in getting out a small pile of the real stuff, much to their satisfaction.

For dinner the boys had canned corn beef, crackers and spring water, and although there was not much variety to the meal they were just as satisfied as though they had enjoyed a regular table d'hote. Dick wasn't quite sure that Pedro had actually deserted them. He had a suspicion that the Mexican might be hiding a short distance away with the purpose of returning during the night when they were asleep, taking possession of their arms and the rest of the gold quartz.

While Sam and Charley resumed their digging after dinner he was considering how they would be able to guard against such a contingency. He decided to bury the quartz somewhere up in the woods for safety's sake. They couldn't take the stuff with them, anyway, on their first trip back, and it would be taking great chances of losing it by leaving it at the mercy of any wayfarer who might come that way while they were absent from the mine. The digging soon became too hot work for Sam and Charley to continue long at, and they sought the shelter of the trees for a long rest. About three o'clock Dick took a look at Carden and saw that his body showed signs of rapid decomposition. He concluded that it was better to bury the prospector right away and not wait till sundown.

So he notified his friends that the interment had better be carried out immediately. A second blanket was placed above the corpse and the cover nailed on the box. They had quite a job carrying the box up to the grave, but they got it there at last, and with the aid of a board slid it down into its last resting place.

Dick, as chief mourner, said an impromptu prayer, while Sam and Charley stood by with their hats off. As soon as the short service was over the hole was filled in and a mound raised on top.

A stone was placed at the foot of the grave, and a piece of board for a headstone on which Dick printed the name of "JOHN CARDEN" in big letters, with the words "Sackville, N. Y." under it.

Dick then looked around for a suitable spot to bury the bags of gold quartz. He discovered a small cave in the rocks, and there the boys dug a hole deep enough to hide the bags, and covered them up, afterwards spreading a lot of brush over it to conceal the fact that an excavation had been made there. Dick brought the saddlebags there,

too, and covered them with brush. He also left the rifle and cartridge-belt in the cave.

"Now, if Pedro returns to-night, expecting to catch us napping, he won't get much for his trouble," said Dick, in a tone of satisfaction.

The boys decided to keep watch, anyway, for part of the night against a possible surprise. They were not disturbed, however, and in the morning they concluded that Pedro had actually left them to their fate. They decided to remain on the ground for a day or two longer and then set out for the hacienda, where they intended to report to Senor Gonzales the treatment they had received from Pedro. Sam and Charley did not do any more digging until the sun got down in the heavens, and then Dick joined them.

Dick was turning over some of the ore his friends had thrown out of the hole when the three were treated to a big surprise. A steeple-crowned hat and then the face and lithe figure of Pepita Gonzales suddenly appeared up the slope in front of the cabin.

The girl looked around and then spied Dick, shovel in hand, tossing the gold quartz into a pile. His back was towards her, but Sam, who rose out of the hole at that moment, saw her, and uttered an astonished exclamation as the girl ran forward. She stopped a short distance off and looked at Dick with flashing eyes as he turned and recognized her.

"Why, Pepita!" he cried, in amazement. "You here!"

"Si, Senor Dick. I am here," she said, in a passionate tone. "See what I found in your room when you had gone."

She held up a photograph of a lovely blonde of seventeen. It was the picture of Dick's girl in New York, which he had brought with him and had left it in the pocket of his light jacket at the hacienda, for the boys had started on their trip without their jackets, the warm weather rendering such a covering unnecessary.

Pepita, with feminine curiosity, had gone through Dick's jacket and found the photograph. It was inscribed, "Yours lovingly, Jessie."

The Senorita, who was already madly infatuated with the young American, flew into a fit of jealous rage at the sight of the picture and the writing.

Here was a rival, and evidently a favored one. And she realized that the girl was a beauty of an opposite type to herself. She had always hated blondes, anyway, and now to find that one of that class seemed to have a hold on the boy of her choice made her simply furious. Her first impulse was to throw the picture on the floor and crush it with her heel into a shapeless mass. But she changed her mind like a flash. She determined to save it and demand an explanation of Dick, forgetting that she had acquired no right to call him to task on such a subject. Her impatience was such that she could not wait Dick's return from his trip. Taking advantage of her father's unexpected absence to Chihuahua, she determined to set out with several peons to intercept Dick on his return from the western spur of the Sierra Madre. She took this step unknown to her mother, who had very little control over her.

When she and her attendants reached the point in the range where the western spur jutted off, they camped to wait for Pedro and the boys to appear. Two hours later the overseer and the

peon came in sight with the five burros, three of them laden with the bags of quartz ore.

Pedro was taken aback when the daughter of his employer confronted him and demanded to know where the boys were. His explanation was so lame that Pepita's suspicions were aroused, and she went for him like a small wildcat. As a result Pedro admitted that he had left them at the cabin of the dead prospector, about twelve or fifteen hours journey from that spot.

Pepita ordered him to lead her there at once. As it was then growing dark, he agreed to set out on the trip next morning. The girl was so impatient that she didn't want to wait, but the overseer said he would not undertake the journey at night.

Before beginning the trip he and the peon hid the bags of quartz in a cave near the trail, and then with the three burros in tow the party started for the location of the gold mine.

As soon as they reached the foot of the declivity Pepita handed her rifle to the overseer and ordered him and the rest of the party to remain there until she should call to them to come forward. Then she rushed forward to have it out with Dick alone. When she flourished the photograph of Dick's New York sweetheart in the air, the boy was astonished both at her words and actions. The hot, jealous nature of the Mexican race blazed in the girl's eyes. There was no more reason in her at that moment than might be expected of a crazy person.

She was a creature of impulse, accustomed to have her own way as a rule. She had determined to win Dick at any cost, and the discovery that she had a rival in his affections had made her so furious that she was capable of going to any extreme to accomplish her object.

In fact, it is not unlikely had her fair rival been within her reach that she would not have hesitated to kill her.

"Who is this girl?" cried Pepita, fiercely. "Do you love her?"

"Why, what do you mean?" responded Dick, amazed at the girl's attitude.

"Do you love her?" screamed the enraged Senorita. "Answer me!" with an imperious stamp of her foot.

Sam and Charley gazed at her in open-mouthed bewilderment.

"Maybe I do," grinned Dick. "What of it?"

With a scream like an enraged tigress the girl tore the photograph into small pieces and flung them at Dick. Then she stood glaring at him and clutching at the bosom of her dress.

"Why, Pepita, what is the matter with you?" the boy asked her.

Pepita stamped her foot angrily and uttered a shrill cry. Immediately Pedro Pacheco, gun in hand, followed by two other Mexicans, appeared over the brow of the eminence.

"Seize that boy!" cried the girl in Spanish, pointing at Dick. The overseer and the two peons advanced to do her bidding.

CHAPTER IX.—Dick Hadley Finds Himself In a Pickle.

"Hold on there," cried Dick, raising the shovel and assuming a defensive attitude. "Why am I to be seized?"

Pedro raised the rifle and covered him. Then he ordered the two peons to secure Dick.

"Here, I object to this kind of treatment," protested the boy.

Sam and Charley drew their revolvers to protect their companion, but the overseer cowed them with the rifle while the peons sprang upon Dick and made him their prisoner.

"Look here, Pepita, what is the meaning of this?" asked Dick, who could not help understanding that she was the cause of the trouble.

The girl turned her back on him and walked away. Pedro told the peons to lead the boy to the cabin.

"You stay where you are!" he hissed to Sam and Charley.

As soon as Dick had been brought to the house Pepita turned upon him in a rage.

"You think to play with me, Senor Dick," she gritted. "You make love to me and yet you have another girl somewhere else that you say you love. You think I stand that? No, I kill you first!"

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Pepita? I never made love to you."

"Madre de Dios! Have not I ears and eyes?" she hissed. "You make me think I am all the world to you, and I give you my heart. Now you say you never make love. You shall marry me, or I will fix you. You think I will let you go back to that other one—the girl with the—bah!—light hair and fair face? Never shall you marry her! You belong to me, and I will have you or you shall die! Entiende?"

Dick was paralyzed. There wasn't the least doubt but that the Senorita was thoroughly in earnest.

"You say I must marry you? You must be crazy!" said the boy.

"You refuse?" she cried, with flashing eyes.

"Why, of course, I refuse. I'm only a boy yet. What do I want to get married for? I've never thought about such a thing."

"Suppose I tell Pedro to shoot you if you will not marry me? He will do as I say."

"You wouldn't tell him to do any such thing."

"You do not know me, Senor Dick. You shall consent to marry me or you will regret it. I would rather see you dead than any other girl should possess you."

If Dick had been temporarily taken with Pepita on account of her beauty and fascinating ways, he was now quite cured of his liking for her by her present deportment. Her persistency in insisting that he marry her whether he wanted to or not had a tendency to make him lose respect for her. At any rate, he was not a boy who could be bulldozed into doing what he didn't care to do.

"I didn't come to Mexico to get married," he said, impatiently. "Why, I ain't done my schooling yet."

"Will you marry me, or not?" she demanded, angrily.

"No. I don't intend to marry you or anybody else for some years yet."

She raised her hand as if about to strike him in the face, and then, changing her mind, she beckoned to Pedro, and they walked away a short distance.

"Pedro," she said in Spanish, "I must bring him to terms. I am determined to make him my husband. You understand?"

"Perfectly, Senorita. You wish my help?"

"Yes. If you can make him do as I wish I will reward you."

"Then leave the matter in my hands. He shall marry you whenever you wish him to, or I do not know what I am talking about," he replied, with a sinister smile.

"You must not injure him. He is mine, and I will not have him hurt," she cried, impetuously.

"I will frighten him, that is all," replied the Mexican, evasively. "If anything happens to him it will be his own fault, not mine. I must use strong measures with him, for he is a boy of much pluck. He will not easily be brought to terms, but, depend on it, he will consent to do as you wish him to before I am done."

"You swear that he will come to no harm?" said Pepita.

"I will swear that I will not lay a finger on him to his injury."

The girl seemed satisfied with that assurance, and told Pedro that she depended on him to make things come around as she wished to have them.

Pedro, on the morning he and his companion deserted the boys, had discovered a cave half a mile from that spot which had evidently once been the scene of a tragedy, for he had found a human skeleton in it. He believed he knew how the man had met his death, and he determined that Dick Hadley should have a chance of experiencing the same torture. His plan was to force the boy to give up all the gold quartz he had in his possession, and swear to keep away from the locality of the mine for good and all.

That was his main object in pretending to fall in with Pepita's plans.

He cared very little whether he helped the Senorita or not, for he had decided to leave her father's service and take possession of the dead prospector's mine. As soon as his conference with the girl was ended he ordered his peon associate to bring up one of the burros. Dick's arms were bound behind him and he was placed astride the animal. The peon was directed to bring along the shovel the boy had been using at the time of his capture. Pedro walked ahead while the peon led the animal. Dick, astonished at the turn events had taken so unexpectedly, wondered where he was being taken to, and what purpose the overseer had in view.

Sam and Charley had attempted to interfere in Dick's behalf, but Pepita, who had taken possession of her rifle again, overawed them, while her two peons jumped in, overpowered and disarmed them. They were forced up against a tree and tied to it, back to back, after which they were left to meditate over the extraordinary change in affairs. Had this been Pedro's work alone, they would not have been so surprised, since they had evidence that he coveted the gold quartz; but the appearance of Pepita on the scene, so far away from her home, and her crazy attitude toward Dick fairly dumfounded them. She did not seem to be the same girl at all. She had developed into a vengeful little spitfire. In the meanwhile, Pedro led the way down the valley to a cavernous opening in the mountain side. The burro was tied to a tree and Dick was lifted off his back by the peon and forced to enter the cave. This proved to be a sort of vestibule to an inner and larger cavern, lighted by a great jagged hole in the roof, through which the sunlight forced its way in a straggling fashion, as the opening was lined and arched

over with bushes. Directly under the break in the roof was a hole in the floor of the cave, about seven feet deep and several yards in circumference. A stout limb of a tree, ten feet tall, shorn of its branches, stuck upright in the center of the hole. Hanging in a heap at the foot of this pole, sustained by strands of rotten rope, was the skeleton of a man, partially attired in the remnants of a thin suit of clothing. This gruesome object had evidently been in that pit for years. That he was a victim of some horrid crime was sufficiently clear. He had evidently been tied to the stake and then left to his fate.

At first sight it would have struck a beholder that he had perished miserably of starvation, but Pedro had a different idea from the presence of a thin stream of water which flowed down the rocks and ran across the floor of the cave, disappearing through a narrow subterranean opening, together with his knowledge of what had happened to another man under similar circumstances.

Whether he was right or not in his surmise was immaterial, and did not particularly interest him, since the conditions looked ripe for the scheme he had in his own mind in connection with Dick Hadley.

CHAPTER X.—Face To Face With a Horrible Death.

"What did you bring me here for?" demanded Dick, whose eyes, not yet accustomed to the partial gloom of the cavern, had not made out the skeleton at the bottom of the hole.

"To talk business," replied Pedro, significantly.

"What is the nature of your business?"

"Pepita wishes that you marry her."

"I can't help what she wishes."

"You will not do it, eh?"

"Not if I can help myself."

"Suppose you can't help yourself—what then?"

To this Dick made no reply.

"Since you do not care to marry her, there is a way for you to not do it."

The Mexican nonchalantly rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"What do you mean?"

"You are in my power," said Pedro, blowing out a few rings of smoke that curled upward toward the opening in the roof and disappeared into the bushes. "Your friends cannot help you. If I choose to kill you in the way that I have selected no one will be the wiser."

The cool, unconcerned way in which he uttered the last sentence gave the boy a chill. He had evidence that the overseer was a rascal at heart, and he knew that a Mexican of that stamp was capable of going to any extreme to accomplish his purpose. He had been told that they valued life very lightly, and that the majority of the race had no great love for Americans, whom they sneeringly called gringos.

Here he was, a hundred miles out in the heart of the Sierra Madre Range. It would be a simple matter for the Mexican to put him out of the way, throw his body into a nearby gully, and make off. There wasn't one chance in a thousand that his body would ever be found and the crime brought home to the overseer, notwithstanding the sinister circumstances connecting Pedro with his disappearance. His friends would, of course, report

the facts to Mr. Swift, if they were allowed to go back to the railroad, and Pedro might be ultimately tracked down and arrested, but murder would have to be proved against him before he could be subjected to the extreme penalty of the Mexican law.

Besides, Dick had no more desire to die suddenly than any other healthy person who sees bright prospects ahead of him.

"I suppose I've got to admit that I'm in your power," replied Dick; "but Senor Gonzales, as well as John Swift, contractor for the Mexican Central Railroad, will hold you responsible for any wrong you may do me."

"Bah!" ejaculated Pedro, contemptuously. "I care that for them," and the Mexican snapped his fingers and blew out more rings of smoke. "Now, attend to me, young Senor. These are my terms for your life: The whole of that gold quartz which the dead miner dug out, and undisputed possession of the ground so that I may dig out as much more as I choose. You must swear to leave the country at once and never return, and you must swear to hold your tongue. Pepita, who is love-sick over you, will forget you after you are gone. I will, as a condition, see to it that she does not annoy you. These are not hard terms, since the gold quartz is not really yours. You took charge of it because the owner is dead. You could not carry it away, anyway, and if you could, of what avail would it be to you? You would be cheated out of most of its value."

"The gold quartz and the mine as well is my property," said Dick.

"Your property!" cried Pedro, with a sarcastic smile.

"Yes. John Carden deeded it to me an hour before he died."

"You have a paper signed by him, then?" said the Mexican, looking hard at the boy.

"I have."

"You will give me that paper, too."

"I will not."

"Ha! Then you refuse the conditions on which I offer you your life?"

"I will consent to let you have all the quartz in sight on condition that you let me go."

"It is not for you to make terms, young Senor. I hold the upper hand. You will do as I say or—you die!"

"You have no right to deprive me of the mine," protested Dick.

"I make the right," answered Pedro, with an unpleasant smile, rolling a fresh cigarette. "Mendez," turning to the peon, "search the boy's pockets for a paper."

"You wouldn't find any, for I haven't got it about me."

"It is at the cabin, then?"

"It is safe, where you never can find it," replied Dick, defiantly.

"You think to outwit me, eh?" said Pedro, lighting the second cigarette. "It is not possible. You shall tell me where you have put that paper."

"You can't make me do that."

"No, young Senor? We shall see. I will show you what is your fate if you make trouble for me. Bring him forward, Mendez. Let him look in the hole."

Dick was forced forward by the peon. He in-

instinctively gazed down into the excavation, which was of stone like the cave itself.

Then he saw the crumbling skeleton with its few shreds of clothing, and he could not repress a shudder at the sight.

"That man was once alive and full of strength like yourself, young Senor," said Pedro, in a crafty tone. "You see he is bound to the stake, which shows that he was put there to die. Why? you ask. Who shall say? Perhaps on account of a woman. Someone else also desired the woman, maybe, and he decoyed this man here and—well, you see the result. Perhaps it was some other reason. That concerns us not. The man is dead long since. How would you like that you take his place?"

Dick made no reply.

"We will see how you will like it for the moment. Perhaps it will help you to decide quickly how you shall save your life," said Pedro, with a cruel leer. "Mendez, jump into that hole and kick those bones from the pole."

The peon obeyed the overseer's command.

"So," said Pedro. "Come out. Lower the young Senor down and tie him tight to the same place."

It was useless for Dick to resist. His arms were bound and he was at the mercy of his captors. In two minutes he was in the hole and the peon, with fresh cord, was securing his chest to the pole. Pedro puffed his cigarette and looked maliciously down at his victim.

"Kick those bones around his feet," he said to Mendez, and the peon did so.

"Now, you think it will feel nice to remain where you are till you become as that skeleton was, young Senor," said the Mexican, with a sinister smile.

"You are a cowardly villain to treat me this way," replied Dick, bitterly. "You would not dare give me a chance for my life on even terms."

"Am I not giving you all the chance you need?" grinned Pedro. "Tell me where I am to find that paper you spoke of, and swear you will leave this country without saying a word about this matter, and you shall go free as the air. I will help myself to the bags of quartz in the cabin without your permission."

"If I agreed to do as you want I have no guarantee that you would keep your part of the agreement. You would probably leave me here to perish, anyway, that you might make sure I would not afterward make trouble for you."

The Mexican gritted his teeth at the boy's reply and looked at him savagely.

"You will agree to my terms or I shall leave you to your fate," he hissed. "You shall not only starve, but you shall drown, too. See that rill of water running down the wall? It crosses this cave here and goes down a small hole in the rock yonder. It seems as nothing, but suppose I alter its course so that it shall run into the hole where you are? It will take two or three days to rise to your mouth, but it will get there, and all the time you will feel its cold embrace as it rises inch by inch. You will suffer the tortures of hunger first, and then you will be strangled so slowly that the halter will be as nothing to it. Does the prospect please you? Give me the clue to where I shall find that paper. Swear to leave the country. That is all I ask, then you will escape this trap

you are in. Refuse, and we leave you not to return."

"I refuse to agree to your terms."

"Then you shall die!" cried Pedro, fiercely.

"My death won't put the paper in your way."

"I care not. I will work the mine as I intended before you spoke of the paper."

"I will make no bargain with you," replied Dick, resolutely.

With an imprecation, Pedro said something in Spanish to Mendez. The peon took the shovel and went outside. Presently he returned with a spadeful of earth. He cast it over the channel of the rill and cut off its flow toward its subterranean retreat. Then he got more earth till he had made a small embankment that turned the course of the water into the hole. Dick soon saw it running down the rocky side of the excavation in which he was held a prisoner. It began to gather in a small pool not far from the pile of bones around his feet. The pool grew steadily larger and spread out toward him. Pedro watched it with demoniacal satisfaction.

"You begin to understand what your fate will be, young Senor," he said, with a cruel laugh, as he rolled a third cigarette. "Yet you still have time to reconsider. Agree to my terms, and if I find the paper, Mendez shall return in less than an hour and release you, while the water shall resume its natural course at once."

"You have had my answer. Once you had that paper in your hands you would not return. I am sure of that. If you leave me here to perish you will be a murderer, and some day will have to account for your crime. That's all I've got to say to you. Go if you intend to. I will put my trust in Heaven and take my chances."

"You are a fool!" gritted the Mexican. "I will leave you to your fate. Come, Mendez, let us go."

The two rascals immediately quitted the cave, and Dick was left to the silence and solitude of the wilderness.

CHAPTER XI.—In Which Sam and Charley Discuss the Situation.

It would not be easy to describe the sensations that filled the brain of Dick Hadley as the steps of the two rascals died away outside and he realized that he was alone and face to face with what appeared to be certain death. The tenor of his thoughts were certainly far from pleasant, and yet had the Mexican returned and offered him another chance on the same terms his reply would have been the same.

To save his life he would have yielded up everything if he could have had faith in Pedro's word; but he believed that it would be more to the villain's interest to break his agreement than to keep it, and so he would not allow the man to have that much the better of him. And yet to die, at his age and under such horrible circumstances, was a prospect enough to have appalled the stoutest heart. He had time to consider the strange conduct of Pepita. If she loved him as her words and actions seemed to imply, would she let him perish thus miserably without making a strong effort to save him? He did not think she would. She had come all that distance out into the heart of the Sierra Madre to demand that he marry her.

He saw that the girl's hot, jealous nature had been stirred to its very depths by the picture of his American sweetheart, and that she was capable of going to extremes in order to carry her point. Whatever arrangement she made made with Pedro he felt sure it did not embrace his death, and he wondered what the girl would say to the overseer when he returned to the cabin without him. Then he wondered what Sam and Charley would do, provided they were free to act. He was satisfied they would try to hunt him up. This cavern was such a short distance from the mine that it seemed to him if they managed to strike the right trail they were bound to investigate it in their efforts to find him. Dick began to notice that the cavern was growing more gloomy every moment.

This fact told him that the sun was far down beyond the mountain tops and that the darkness of night was rapidly approaching. It would soon be as black as the ace of clubs in the cave, and that would make his position all the more terrible. The chilly feeling around his feet called his attention to the fact that he was now standing in an inch or two of cold spring water, but his long boots would protect his lower limbs for some time yet, possibly all through the night, if no relief came. At length the light faded entirely out of the cavern, and Dick was face to face with the horrors of a long night. The moments went slowly by, as if held back by the hand of time, and all Dick could do was to think and ask himself if he really was slated to die. When Pedro, accompanied by his associates in rascality, got back to the cabin, he found Pepita impatiently awaiting his return.

"What have you done with Senor Dick?" she demanded in Spanish.

"He is quite safe, Senorita."

"Where did you take him?"

"To a certain place in the mountains."

"What place?" insisted the girl.

"It need not matter to you what place," replied the Mexican doggedly.

"I want to know," she answered sharply.

Pedro, however, refused to tell her.

"You have not harmed him?" she cried, her eyes beginning to flash.

"Why should I, Senorita? What have I against him? You are the one interested in bringing him to terms."

"Think you he will agree to marry me?"

"I think twenty-four hours of starvation will bring him around."

"You have him tied up in some place not far away?"

"Yes, Senorita."

"And what did you say to him?"

"That you were determined to make him marry you at any cost. That you would rather see him dead than that any other girl should have him."

"That is right. He shall not leave the country to return to that other girl whose picture I found in the pocket of his coat. He shall marry me or—"

"Well?" said Pedro, as Pepita stopped.

"No matter. I will see tomorrow. For tonight he shall think it over. In the morning he shall give me his answer. If he once more refuses he shall stay where he is until he agrees to do as I wish. Now we will have something to eat. Do you attend to that."

"We shall keep the other two boys tied up for the present, eh?"

"It is better that they should be where we can keep watch on them," she replied.

Pedro thought so, too, in order to avoid trouble with them. Sam and Charley, when they saw the Mexican and his peon companion return without Dick, began to entertain fears that their companion had perhaps been made the victim of foul play. Although they were tied so that they could not see each other, they were close enough to be able to carry on a conversation over their shoulders.

"What do you suppose those rascals have done with Dick?" Sam asked.

"How could I guess any better than you? Things look mighty serious, though, for him, in my opinion, and maybe for us, too, for all we can tell."

"You're right, it does, Charley. I can't understand the change that's taken place in that girl. That photograph of Jessie Millwood, Dick's girl, seems to have been the cause of turning the senorita into a regular fire-eater. Just think of her coming away out to this place, ninety miles from the hacienda, to have it out with Dick."

"Gee! I'm so glad she didn't fall in love with me. These Mexican girls are altogether too strenuous to suit me."

"I should say they are, when they're jealous. I'd feel sorry for Jessie if she were here at this stage of the game. I don't think she'd escape alive."

"I'd like to know where Pedro carried Dick off to, and what he means to do with him if he hasn't already done something."

"So would I," replied Sam, in an anxious tone.

"It was an unlucky day that we got lost in that valley and ran across Pepita."

"It was that. I'm afraid this mine is not going to do Dick any good."

"No, nor us, either, which is tough, after all our anticipations of making a bank account out of it."

"This is a rotten country," said Sam, in a tone of disgust. "I don't see that we've had such a swell time since we came into it."

"Oh, things were going on all right up to this afternoon," replied Charley.

"They're pretty shaky just at present. I wonder how long we are to remain tied up to this tree. Pepita doesn't take the least notice of us. She doesn't seem to consider our feelings at all."

"If she fails to have her way with Dick she may take satisfaction out of us."

"I think she's taking it out of us anyway. When I go back to my old man I bet there'll be something doing if there's any law in Mexico."

"I hope so. I'd give a good deal to be within hailing distance of the railroad at this moment."

"My father has a pretty good pull with the officials of the Mexican Central. He'll make Rome howl to get justice. Pepita coming out here and raising all this racket is going to make trouble for the senor, her father."

"You bet your life it is."

"The idea of her wanting to force Dick to marry her against his will! What would he do with a wife, anyway? He doesn't want one any more than we do. I wonder if all the Mexican girls are as hot-headed as Pepita. If they are they must be a dangerous proposition to tackle."

"If one of them made a break for me like Pepita has for Dick, it would be me for the woods."

While the boys were talking the sun set and soon darkness fell upon the landscape. Pedro and Mendez were in the cabin getting supper ready. The sight of smoke issuing from the chimney made Sam remember that he had a stomach, and he and Charley began to speculate as to the chances of anything in the edible line coming their way. At length Pedro appeared at the door of the cabin and called Pepita inside. The two peons who had come with the girl squatted outside and Mendez presently brought them a mess of something to satisfy their appetites. No one seemed to pay any attention to Sam and Charley, and as the moments slipped away their hopes of getting any supper began to grow beautifully less.

CHAPTER XII.—Dick Makes His Escape from the Cavern.

It must not be supposed that a plucky lad like Dick Hadley would yield passively to the terrible fate that confronted him. But as the water gathered around his feet, and he could feel it gradually rising up his bootlegs, a feeling of desperation seized him and he began to struggle with his bonds. Although the cords showed no signs of yielding to any great extent, the pole lost its original firmness and moved about with the motions of his body. He soon noticed this fact, and began to direct his energies on it, moving it back and forth from side to side. Finally it became so loose that Dick, grasping it with his hands, lifted it entirely out of the hole. A thrill of hope encouraged him now, and he proceeded to slowly pull up the pole, inch by inch, with his fingers.

In half an hour he got hold of the bottom of it, but then his efforts came to a standstill. He could not get it up any higher, owing to the fact that his arms were bound. The weight of the pole, however, caused it to sag over, and the moment he let go of the bottom end it fell over against the top of the hole in which he was a prisoner. Dick then tried different tactics to get rid of it. He stooped down slowly again and again in an effort to slide out from under the pole, as the cords holding him to it were now fairly loose. Unfortunately, the pole followed the motions of his body and stuck to him like a leech. Foiled in his attempts to get away from it, he began turning around as rapidly as he could, which caused the pole to swing around in a circle, brushing against the edge of the hole. There was a break in the rocky edge of the hole at one point.

As long as Dick swung the pole with some rapidity it passed over this break, but when, as he grew exhausted by his efforts, its speed relaxed to a spasmodic swing, it slipped into the break and caught. The rocky cleft held it with sufficient firmness for Dick to take advantage of his chance to pull away from the pole altogether. Although free of the pole, his position was not greatly improved, for his bound arms prevented him from pulling himself out of the excavation. The only real advantage he had secured was ability to move at will around the circumscribed

space of the hole. After resting himself from his late exertions he began to devote his entire attention to the rope that secured his arms.

He pulled and tugged at it in every imaginable way, but though it gave some it did not become sufficiently loose for him to withdraw one of his arms. The water was now about three inches deep in the hole, and Dick realized that fact as he splashed about in it. With great persistency he worked the fingers of one hand up to the other arm until he succeeded in grasping one of the cords that bound him. His object now was to try and work that cord down his arm. Fifteen minutes later his arms were free, and he gave a sigh of satisfaction. To escape from the excavation was not a difficult matter now. He pulled the pole down from where it was caught in the crevice in the rocks, placed it at an angle against the side of the hole and shinned up to the top. Then he lost no time feeling his way out of the cavern, and soon stood a free boy under the brilliant, starlit heavens.

"Nobody can tell how good it feels to be boss of his own actions till he has been through such a deal as I have just weathered. I thought at one time that it was all up with me. I guess I had a close call, all right. If the three of us get back to New York in good shape I'll have a story to tell that would make a newspaper reporter gasp. Now, the question is, what am I going to do? The mine is in possession of that rascally Pedro and his villainous associate, Mendez. Sam and Charley may be prisoners. As for Pepita and her peons, I must consider them my enemies, too, in spite of the fact that she claims to be dead gone on me. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and as Pedro and the others are in possession of the cabin where our provisions are, I don't see how I'm going to feed. I can't live on air, so I'm afraid I'm in a very serious scrape, anyway, notwithstanding the awful predicament from which I have just escaped."

He sat for half an hour on a rock in the moonlight and tried to figure out how he was going to get something to eat, but he couldn't reach a solution of the difficulty.

"Well, I must return to the mine and see how things are getting on there. I must take care that I'm not seen by the enemy, or I'll surely be made a prisoner again, and it's pretty certain that Pedro would take special pains that I didn't escape a second time."

So Dick started for the cabin, taking a roundabout course that would bring him to the back of the building. When he reached the locality of the mine there was no sign of life in the neighborhood of the cabin.

"Can it be that Pedro, Pepita and the rest have left the place, taking Sam and Charley with them?" Dick asked himself, as he cautiously drew near the house. "Or are they all asleep in the cabin?"

The latter idea seemed the more probable, for Dick scarcely believed that Pedro would leave the mine so quick as that. On his return to the place after leaving Dick in the cavern, the boy judged that he had gone into the cabin to take possession of the remaining bags of gold quartz. Of course he didn't find them, for, as the reader knows, Dick and his friends had buried them in the little cave up the mountainside.

"I'll bet when he found the quartz missing that he tried to force Sam or Charley to tell him where the bags were hidden," said Dick, as he stood gazing at the cabin, which looked silent and deserted in the moonlight. "The question is, were they intimidated into telling him? I can find that out by running up to the cave."

Dick made his way to the little cave and found everything just as he and his companions had left it, so he was satisfied that the quartz was still there. He returned to the back of the cabin and took fresh observations. After satisfying himself that no one was about on the outside of the building, he cautiously approached the front door. It stood half open. Dick got down on his hands and knees, crawled up to the entrance and looked in. He could make out nothing, owing to the gloom which enveloped the room, but he heard the deep breathing of a number of sleepers. Removing his boots, he entered the cabin in his stocking feet, and soon located the positions of several of the sleepers.

Mendez and the other two peons were curled up near the doorway. Pepita, Pedro and his two friends he judged to be at the far end of the room. Passing the sleeping peons like a shadow, he found no difficulty in reaching the shelf where the canned stuff stood. Selecting the nearest three cans, he made his escape as softly as he had entered. When he got outside he resumed his boots and retired up to the little cave. Concealing two of the cans in the underbrush, he opened the other with the aid of a stone and found it contained canned beef. He got away with half of the contents of the can before his hunger was appeased. After washing his meal down with a drink of water, he secured his rifle and the cartridge belt, and continued on up the mountain till he found a secluded spot among the trees. There he lay down and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.—In Which Dick Plays a March on Pedro Pacheco.

When Dick awoke next morning it was broad daylight. He walked back to the cave and made his breakfast off the remainder of the meat in the can he had opened the night before. Then he slipped down the mountain side to a point where he could overlook the site of the mine. Smoke was issuing from the chimney of the cabin, which told him that some cooking was under way. Pedro and Pepita were standing near the door talking. Neither his friends nor the three peons were in sight. While he was watching the girl and the overseer, Mendez came to the door and said something to them. They broke off their conversation and entered the cabin.

"Gone in to eat, I guess," thought Dick.

While Dick was watching for further developments he saw Pepita's two peons appear, leading quite a bunch of burros. He counted them and found there were ten altogether.

"Why, where did the two extra ones come from?" the boy muttered. "We had five animals, then Pepita's party brought three, which makes eight. That's all that were around here yesterday afternoon. I don't see any strangers on the scene to account for the other pair. By George! Those two must have belonged to Carden. I knew he couldn't be out here without one animal, at least. He must have had his burros staked somewhere

that there's grass and water for them to subsist on. The peons found the place and tethered the other burros there, too. That seems quite clear."

The peons tied the burros under a tree and then entered the cabin. After the lapse of perhaps a quarter of an hour Pedro came out of the house, followed by two of the peons leading Sam and Charley. They were marched over to a tree and tied up as before. The natives retired to a short distance, and throwing themselves on the ground, rolled and lighted cigarettes. Pedro remained with Sam and Charley, and was evidently holding an argument with them. Dick had a good view of the trio, and he wondered if the conversation related to the bags of gold quartz. As a matter of fact, that was what Pedro was questioning the two boys about. Neither Sam nor Charley would oblige him with the information. The boys were game, however, and so the Mexican made no headway with them. Finally he quit them and started to look around on his own account. He particularly examined the ground at the back of the cabin to see if it showed signs of having been dug into. Then he went into the house and looked the floor all over for similar signs. He was disappointed on all sides, and returned to where Sam and Charley were bound to the tree.

"Look here, young senors, if you refuse to tell me where those bags of quartz are hidden, I will leave you both bound to this tree when we go away. How will that suit you, eh?"

"You wouldn't dare do that," replied Sam.

"No?" replied the Mexican, with an unpleasant smile. "You try me too far and see what I dare do. Your companion, Senor Dick, is now learning what I dare to do. He refused to accept my terms and is taking the consequences."

"What did you do to him?"

"No matter. That is only for him to know. I did not myself lay a finger on him. I had sworn that I would not harm him," he said, with a malicious grin. "I put him where he could not get away. By and by I will see him again. Perhaps by that time he will consent to change his mind and do as I want. If he does you shall all go free, but you must also leave the country with him and swear to hold your tongues."

"Well, we're not going to tell you anything unless Dick says so. Take us to him and let him decide the matter. If he's willing to make a bargain with you to save us all from further trouble, we won't kick. He knows where the quartz is hidden. As it belongs to him you must do business with him. We're not going to give anything away without his knowledge and consent."

"You talk very brave, young seconr," replied Pedro, with a sneer. "Before I turn the screw on you I will see Senor Dick and find if he is more reasonable this morning. If he says what I wish it will not be necessary that I hold further talk with you. If he still acts the fool—caramba! I fix all three of you so that you never leave these mountains."

Thus speaking, the overseer walked off rolling a cigarette, which he lighted and then approached Pepita. After a short talk with the girl three burros were detached from the bunch, the senorita mounted one, Pedro and Mendez the other two, and the party set off down the declivity in the direction of the cavern where Dick had been left a prisoner. The two remaining peons continued

to loll and smoke under the trees. Dick decided that now was the time for him to act while the enemy was divided. He came down the mountain side and suddenly appeared before Sam and Charley. The two boys were both astonished and delighted at his unexpected appearance. With his sharp jackknife he cut his companions free. The two peons were unsuspecting of what was going on so close at hand, and the three boys sought the shelter of the back of the cabin before they noticed that anything had happened.

"Now," said Dick, in a business-like tone, "the first thing we've got to do is to secure those two Greasers and tie them up so they'll be helpless. We'll work around behind the trees and take them by surprise."

Dick had the rope in his hands with which Sam and Charley had been tied up, for he intended to use it for putting the two peons in the same predicament. The boys approached the two Mexicans so cautiously that the men were not aware of their presence until Sam and Dick, each selecting a victim, sprang upon them. A struggle, of course, ensued, but the boys were strong and determined, and with the help of Charley soon had the peons gagged, bound and secured to the tree under which they had been resting.

"Now, then, Sam, go up to the cave where we buried the quartz and bring down the saddlebags. I'm not going to disturb the ore bags. They're safe enough where they are. While you're away Charley and I will get things ready for an immediate start."

Sam started off to obey Dick's orders, while the latter led one of the burros up to the cabin door. There still remained several empty bags in the house. Under Dick's directions Charley filled one of them with all the canned goods and crackers that remained. The bag was fastened on the burro's back. When Sam returned with Carden's saddlebags they were also added to the burro's load.

"Now, we'll start off at once, fellows, and take a course to the south and westward, and feel our way out of the range as best we can. We've got grub enough to last us some time. It may take us a week or ten days even to find our way back to the railroad, but what's the difference, as long as we get there?" said Dick.

"Why not go back the way we came?" said Charley. "That would take us back to the hacienda inside of three days."

"If we knew the way as well as Pedro we might do it in that time; but we don't. We're just as liable to get lost in the range as not without a guide, and as Pedro and his party are sure to take that direction in an effort to recapture us as soon as they find we have escaped, why, it is much better for us to take an opposite road, even if it is roundabout. We'll get out of the range somehow."

Accordingly, the little party, mounting three of the burros, and leading the loaded one, left the mining property without any further delay.

CHAPTER XIV.—Trying to Get Out of the Range.

Judging their course by the position of the sun, they rode as near due south as they could go. They were soon out of sight of the cabin, but

Dick made notes of the landscape for future reference, for, of course, he intended to come back to his mine as soon as possible with a suitable escort that would prevent any interference on the part of Senor Gonzales' overseer. The deed to the property was in the saddlebags, and as soon as he had had it recorded at Chihuahua no one could take the mine from him. He knew that Sam's father would see that he got his rights in the matter, and the chances were that gentleman would put the Mexican authorities on Pedro's trail with the view of having the rascal caught and punished. As for Pepita, Dick had no intention of having her prosecuted for the part her jealousy had induced her to undertake. He told Sam and Charley that the senorita must be left out of the story they had to tell. Dick then proceeded to tell his companions about the treatment he had received from Pedro and Mendez at the cavern.

"What are you going to do about your mine, Dick?" asked Sam.

"I'm going to look after it, don't you fret."

"If you got up a company Charley and me I suppose would come in for a few of the shares," said Sam.

"Sure, you would. I'd see you made a good thing as well as myself. We're chums, you know, and are roughing it together. If I sell the mine as it stands, after its value has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the purchaser, you'll get a rakeoff. So you see, no matter what I may do, you'll be taken care of."

After traveling some miles in a fairly straight direction, they got mixed up in a trackless part of the range, and it took them some hours to make any further headway worth mentioning. They camped beside a running stream and ate their dinner, after which they lay under the trees and rested for some time. After three o'clock they resumed their journey. Night found them in the midst of a long ravine. After stopping to eat supper, they continued on by the light of the stars. Later on the moon helped them out, and they did not pause for sleep until close on to midnight. They were up at sunrise and on their way again, looking for water. It was eleven o'clock before they came across a stream. Then they tethered the animals, ate their breakfast and turned in on the ground for rest and sleep. Only for the fact that getting out of the range seemed to be a serious business, the boys would have felt as happy as larks over their adventure in the wilds of northwestern Mexico. It was late in the afternoon when they woke up and prepared to go on again.

"I wonder where Pedro and his crowd are by this time?" Sam said.

"Hunting for us, I suppose, over the track by which he brought us to these regions," replied Dick.

"He'll find us, too—I guess nit," grinned Charley.

"He won't dare go back to the hacienda after what has happened," remarked Sam.

"No, I don't think he will. He'll try and dispose of the gold quartz I gave him at the nearest smelter, and probably return to the mine for more. I've got to get back as soon as I can and head him off."

"We'll come back with you, of course," said Sam.

"Sure thing, if your father has no objections."

"He don't object to our keeping you company. He'll see that we're properly protected."

The boys traveled well into the night again, as it was much pleasanter than under the hot sun, which had already made them as brown as berries. They spent the night in a small cave and awoke again at sunrise. The third day's journey was the slowest and most difficult they had yet experienced since leaving the mine. Their way led them through a deeply wooded, narrow canyon, almost impassable in places for the hardy little burros. They were obliged to take frequent rests, and the moon was shining when they finally camped for the night beside a stream that marked the end of the worst stage of the day's travel. Next day they ascended the mountains again and got a view of the plains beyond.

"Hurrah!" cried Sam. "We'll soon be out of the range."

Dick and Charley also felt like shouting their satisfaction, but they refrained and contented themselves with gazing upon the landscape beyond the western spur of the Sierra Madre. Late that afternoon they descended to the plain and camped among the foothills. They saw a mountain stream a short distance away, but it was not practicable to reach it with the burros from where they were. While Dick was tethering the animals on the grass Sam and Charley took a couple of empty cans and started for the stream. Dick was opening a can of corned beef for supper when he heard a shout in the direction taken by his companions, and then a pistol shot.

"Great-Caesar!" he cried, starting to his feet. "What does that mean?"

A second shot awoke the echoes of the evening air, and Dick saw the smoke curling up near the mountain stream. Then came a cry for help in tones that sounded like Charley's voice.

"There's something wrong!" cried Dick, snatching up his rifle and starting for the scene of trouble. "Can it be that Pedro and his party have been following on our trail after all?"

He hustled forward and soon came in sight of the stream. Peering through the bushes, he saw Charley in the hands of Mendez and the other two peons, while Pepita was seated on a burro near by. There were sounds of someone crashing through the bushes at Dick's left. He thought it was Sam, but a moment later he saw it was Pedro, with a revolver in his hand.

"He's looking for Sam, who's got away," breathed Dick, following the Mexican's movements.

Suddenly the rascal gave a shout of exultation and pounced down upon an object concealed in

the bushes. In another moment he was dragging Sam from his place of concealment. Sam uttered a loud shout and struck Pedro a tremendous blow in the face, which caused the overseer to release his hold on him. The boy darted into the bushes again. With an imprecation Pedro raised his revolver and took aim at the fleeing boy. Dick raised his rifle quicker than a flash, covered the Mexican and fired.

CHAPTER XV.—Conclusion.

Simultaneous with the crack of Dick's rifle Pedro uttered a hoarse cry, and half turning around, fell forward on his back and lay quite still. The revolver fell upon the ground.

"Come back, Sam," shouted Dick, springing forward to see if he had really killed the Mexican. Sam recognized his friend's voice after hearing the report of his weapon, and turned back.

"Shot him, have you?" said Sam, picking up Pedro's revolver. "Serves him right if you killed him. He fired twice at me, and I only escaped his bullets by the skin of my teeth."

"No, he isn't dead," said Dick, who was kneeling beside the fallen rascal; "but I guess he's out for good, just the same. Come, we'll leave him here and rescue Charley, who's in the hands of Mendez and Pepita's satellites."

The two boys issued from the bushes into full view of the girl and the peons. Charley was being bound to a tree.

"Let him go!" cried Dick, covering Mendez with his rifle.

The rascal turned with a snarl, and, seeing the boys, drew the revolver he had in his belt. Dick was not taking any chances with the Mexicans, so, without trying to parley further with people who understood little, if any, English, he fired at Mendez's arm. The rascal uttered a scream of pain and dropped the weapon. Dick had broken his arm with the bullet. He and Sam then threatened the other two with their weapons, and they threw up their arms in terror of their lives. The two boys then advanced.

"Pepita," said Dick, "tell those men of yours to release Charley Ross."

The girl said something to them in Spanish, and they undid the ropes that held the boy. Charley snatched up the revolver dropped by the wounded Mendez and rushed over to his companions.

"What about Pedro?" was the first thing he said.

"He's down and out with a bullet in his chest," said Dick. "Sam, you and Charley go and fetch him over to his friends, and let them see that he's out of business."

The two boys obeyed their young leader, and Pepita uttered a low cry when she saw Pedro borne forward apparently dead. They laid him under one of the trees and left him to be attended by his associates.

"Well, Pepita," said Dick, walking up to her burro, "are you still an enemy of mine?"

She covered her face with her hands and began to weep.

"There's my hand, Sencrita," continued Dick. "I don't bear you any hard feeling for the trouble you got us into. Let us be friends again."

She seized his hand and carried it to her lips.

"I am very unhappy," she cried. "You do not care for me any more, and I don't care if I die."

"Don't talk about dying. Come with us and let us take you back to your home. Leave these fellows to look after themselves. Pedro is a big rascal and deserves all he got, while Mendez isn't much better. They left me bound in a hole in a cave to die, and I should be there now, only luck played in my favor."

"I will come with you," said the girl, looking pretty badly broken up.

In fact, she was almost a wreck of her former dainty self. A week's roughing among the mountains, while it hadn't hurt her, physically speaking, had demoralized her womanly charms to a considerable extent.

"Fill your cans with water," said Dick to Sam and Charley, "and follow us."

He seized the burro by its rein and started by a roundabout course to regain their camping-ground. It took three-quarters of an hour to reach their camp by a way practicable for Pepita's burro to follow. When they got there Dick helped the senorita to dismount, and he treated her so kindly that she started to cry again, and finally threw her arms around his neck and kissed him with all the ardor of her warm Mexican blood. The girl was now thoroughly repentant, and Dick assured her that he forgave her, and would not tell her parents what she had been guilty of. They had their usual supper, in which Pepita participated. She told Dick that she had never intended to have Pedro ill-treat him. Her object in letting Pedro take charge of him was to frighten him into agreeing to marry her. Pedro had sworn not to injure him, and she had believed him. He had broken his oath, and she was glad he was now suffering the consequences. She said she hoped he would die, for if he recovered he would try to kill Dick out of re-

venge, and might succeed. Then she asked Dick if he really loved the girl of the photograph, and intended to marry her.

"No, I don't love any girl. She's just a dear friend of my sister's, and I like her a whole lot myself, but I never thought about marrying her. I'm too young to think about marrying for several years yet."

Pepita seemed greatly comforted by Dick's assurance that he did not love her nor intend to marry the original of the photograph. A ray of hope came into her heart that there was still a chance for her to win this young American to whom she had surrendered her affections. After supper Dick said they would continue their journey, as he did not care to stay all night in the vicinity of the enemy, who, though they were not very formidable now, were still capable of giving them trouble. They continued on across the plain for several hours, and finally camped near a stream. The boys alternately kept watch during the night, but the party was not disturbed.

Next day they reached a break in the lower part of the range through which Pepita said they could easily ride to the hacienda. Dick agreed to see that she got home before he and his friends went on to the railroad. Just at sundown they came in sight of the hacienda, and half an hour later they were at the front door. Pepita was embraced with joy by her anxious mother, while the boys were received with open arms for bringing her back. The senorita's father and several of his hands were searching the range for her, and they had not returned when the boys took their leave next morning. Pepita had a tearful parting with Dick, who felt sorry for the girl. He promised that he would call at the hacienda later on and see her again, with which assurance the lovesick senorita had to be content.

A peon was sent with the boys to see that they reached the railroad all right. Mr. Swift received the boys back in a matter-of-fact way. He had not the least idea of the strenuous adventures through which his son and companions had passed since they left the railroad, but supposed they had been at the hacienda ever since he got word from Senor Gonzales that the lads were to spend a week or two at his home. His astonishment may be imagined when the boys told their story, which omitted any particular reference to Pepita. Dick's statement about the gold mine that had come into his possession in so singular a manner amazed Mr. Swift, and it was not until the boy exhibited the papers from the saddlebags, and the bunch of golden nuggets, that he actually placed full credence in the story.

Then Dick asked him for his advice and assist-

ance in the matter. The engineer readily agreed to see him through, and secure him the undisputed ownership of the valuable property. Next day the three boys accompanied him to Chihuahua. John Carden's deed of conveyance was duly and legally registered, and then a mining expert was secured to visit the mine and pass upon its probable value. Mr. Swift accompanied the expedition to the western spur of the Sierra Madre and saw the property with his own eyes. Carden's estimate of the mine was confirmed by the expert, who declared that the ore in sight furnished sufficient evidence for estimating the value of the property at several millions. On the return of the party to the railroad Mr. Swift advised the formation of a company for the purpose of working the mine.

Dick agreed to anything that he advocated. Mr. Swift accordingly set the plan in motion. Several capitalists of Chihuahua were induced to take the matter up in return for a substantial interest in the mine. The company was duly formed and the engineer saw that the controlling interest was secured to Dick. The boy gave him a power-of-attorney to represent him, as he and his friends had to return north. Mr. Swift, as Dick's representative, had himself elected president and general manager, and gave considerable of his attention to the development of the mine. The following summer the three boys revisited Mexico and found the mine in full and paying operation. Dick also found Pepita more attractive than ever and just as much devoted to him.

In fact, she played her cards so well that before he returned north he had, with her parents' consent, agreed to marry her when he had completed his education. Perhaps the fact that he was to become president and general manager of the mine himself at the end of his schooldays, which would necessitate him taking up his residence in the State of Chihuahua, had a good deal to do with Pepita's conquest. When he finally returned to Mexico to marry Pepita and take up his residence permanently at the old hacienda, Sam Swift went with him to live at Chihuahua as secretary of the company.

Today Dick Hadley's mine is known as one of the richest in the western section of the Sierra Madre Range. It has already made Dick a wealthy man, while Sam Swift and Charley Ross are each drawing large incomes from their stock. A year or two ago Charley went to visit Dick on his own wedding trip, and then the three boys met together for the first time in five years. Dick and Sam had a whole lot to tell Charley about the workings of the mine, and you may well believe that they did not forget to talk over the time

when for a brief interval they were boy gold diggers in Mexico.

Next week's issue will contain "A BOY STOCK BROKER; OR, FROM ERRAND BOY TO MILLIONAIRE."

CROWS SAVE MONEY

There's a rancher out San Fernando Valley way who has revised all his preconceived notions about crows. Inasmuch as they have just saved him \$5,000, he feels that he is in duty bound to chuck the "scarecrows" and cultivate his new-found friends. In other words, he's off the anti-crow movement for life. Mrs. Robert Fargo, programme chairman of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, vouches for the fact in the case. The farmer has forty-five acres of tomatoes. They were coming along finely when he discovered some weeks ago that tomato worms had invaded the field and were destroying the plants.

All hands, men, women and children, were drafted to wage war on the worms which multiplied at an appalling rate. As many as 1,000 of them would be found in a single morning.

The fight appeared to be hopeless and the farmer, in despair, had almost resigned himself to the loss of his crop when the black battalions of his rescuers arrived one morning.

A veritable cloud of the birds descended on one corner of the field. At first he supposed it merely meant more trouble. In a short time he discovered his mistake.

The new arrivals were after the worms and they got them, too. The loyal birds stayed right on the job for several days. A careful search of the field several days after they left revealed only three of the worms.

Not a tomato plant was disturbed by the birds, according to the rancher. He is now trucking his tomatoes to a nearby cannery which contracted for them. At the price fixed he will clear \$5,000.

If the crows had not arrived on time, there would have been neither vines nor tomatoes left in a few days, so he credits them with having saved him the results of a year's labor, the cost of his plants and returned him a neat profit besides.

Flush—The estimated wealth of the United States is \$150,000,000,000. Broke—Well, the last six ciphers represent my share.

HARRY THE HALF-BACK

OR

A FOOTBALLIST FOR FAIR

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XIX.

The Search.

"How do you know?"

"Why, sir, the bed is all made up just as I did it yesterday morning," the woman explained.

The professor stared. Then, as the import of the woman's words took hold upon him, he turned pale.

"When was she seen last?" he queried.

"Yesterday evening, sir. I saw her go out for her regular evening walk."

"And you did not see her return?"

"No, sir; but I thought nothing about it, for I do not always see her when she comes in."

"I understand; you supposed that she had come in and gone to her room."

"Yes, sir."

The professor leaped up, all excitement.

"This must be seen into at once!" he cried.

"It is a very strange affair—yes, an alarming affair!"

Mike Murphy was summoned, and he was asked if he had seen Winnie leaving or returning to the college building the evening before.

"Oi saw her sthert fur a walk, sur," was the reply; "but Oi did not say her come back."

"We will search the house," the professor said.

"We will not say anything to any one until we are sure that Winnie is not about the place."

Mike Murphy and the housekeeper made a thorough search, the professor aiding, but no signs of the girl was found, of course.

"She's not in the house, sir," said the housekeeper.

"Shure an' she isn't, sur, more's the pity," said Mike.

The professor, now thoroughly alarmed, called a meeting of the faculty and placed the matter before them. It was quickly decided to hold no sessions until the mystery of the disappearance of the professor's daughter was cleared up. It was decided to tell the students the news and enlist them in the search for the missing maiden.

This was done and soon the students were out searching.

They made their way along the lake road, where, as was well known, Winnie usually walked of evenings.

They scattered through the hills and timber and made a thorough search indeed.

The professor, fearing his daughter had fallen into the lake and been drowned, had it dragged all along the shore near where the road ran. But of course the girl's body was not found.

Silkwell and his three cronies were among the searchers, and they seemed to be searching as earnestly as any, and indeed this was true of

Wilkins, Small and Thorp, for they were not in Silkwell's confidence in this affair of the kidnapping of the girl.

Harry Winslow was among those who were most eager and earnest in the search. With him was Denman, Parker and Westley.

The search was kept up till noon and then the students returned to the college and ate dinner, only to be off again at once. They were eager to find the missing girl—and yet they feared that they might find her dead.

Along toward evening Winslow and his three companions, tired and almost discouraged, were passing near the village of Wrightmore, and suddenly Denman called the attention of the others to a boy of perhaps ten years who was motioning toward them from the edge of the timber.

"Let's see what he wants," said Winslow.

They hastened over and joined the boy.

"Well," said Winslow, "what do you want?"

"Say," said the little chap, a shrewd look on his face, "air ye fellers lookin' fur er gal?"

The youths started and exchanged glances.

"Yes," said Winslow, eagerly. "do you know anything about her? Can you tell us where we will find her?"

The boy stuck his tongue into the cheek and winked.

"I might tell ye sumthin' ef ye c'u'd make et worth while ter me," he said.

"Why, you blasted little scoun—" began Parker, but Winslow motioned to him to be silent.

At the same time he drew from his pocket a twenty-dollar gold piece and held it up before the boy's eyes.

"Tell us where we will find the girl and this is yours," he said, eagerly.

An avaricious look appeared on the boy's face.

"I'll show ye whur she is fur thet shiner, mister," he said.

"Quick! Lead the way!" urged Winslow, whose eyes were shining with excitement and hope.

"Come erlong" said the boy. "But, say, hev ye got enny weapins?"

"No; we won't need any, will we?"

"I dunno. Whar we're goin' thar air er couple uv mighty tuff customers, I'm tellin' ye!"

"Only two? We can handle them, weapons or no weapons!" cried Winslow. "Lead on!"

The boy obeyed and led the way northward along the shore of the lake. As he went he explained, in answer to questions from the youths, that he had the evening before been fishing down by the lake, and had seen two tough-looking thugs come across the lake in a boat, and after making a landing they had lifted a girl out of the boat and disappeared behind some bushes. The boy had crept in behind the bushes, and had found that there was a cave there in the face of the bluff, and back in the cave he saw a fire burning, and he could hear the murmur of voices.

"We'll find Winnie there!" declared Winslow; "how far is it to the cave, sonny?"

"We're putty nigh thar, mister."

A few minutes later they stood at the entrance to the cave. They heard the murmur of a voice, and at a word from Winslow they dashed into the cave, crying:

"Surrender, you scoundrels!"

CHATER XX.

Found!

Winnie Marshfield was there, but the thugs were not.

The girl's arms were bound, but she was not gagged, and she gave utterance to a glad cry as she saw who the newcomers were.

"Saved!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I am so glad that you have come!"

"Where are they? Where are the scoundrels?" cried Winslow.

"They ran away as you came in," replied Winnie.

"Which way did they go?" eagerly.

The girl nodded toward the rear of the cave.

"That way," she said.

"After them, boys!" cried Harry. "I'll be with you as soon as I free Miss Marshfield."

The three ran back into the cave, and Winslow hastened to cut the girl's bonds.

"Oh, thank you!" said Winnie. "How did you manage to find me?"

"This boy saw the thugs bring you here, and he guided us," with a nod toward the little chap, who was standing near at hand.

Winslow was about to excuse himself and follow his three comrades, when they suddenly put in an appearance.

"There's an exit back there," explained Parker, "and the thugs have escaped."

"They are only the tools," said Winnie; "perhaps you may be able to catch the principal."

"The principal?" remarked Winslow, inquiringly.

"Yes; those two thugs kidnapped me at the instigation of Percy Silkwell."

The four stared at the speaker in amazement.

"You don't mean it!" finally gasped Winslow.

"Yes, I do. Percy Silkwell was here last night, after they brought me here, and avowed that fact that he was responsible for having me kidnapped."

"The scoundrel!" burst from Winslow's lips.

"He has gotten himself into trouble now, for sure," from Parker.

"Why did he do such a thing?" queried Walter Denman.

Winnie blushed and said:

"He—wished me to promise—to marry him. I have refused to let him pay any attention to me again and again, and so he took this means of bringing the matter about."

"Well, that beats anything I ever heard of!" cried Winslow, wrathfully.

"He has a preacher-friend who is somewhat unscrupulous, so he informed me, and this man was coming here and was going to perform the ceremony."

"Say, that fellow Silkwell ought to be hung!" said Westley.

"Let us hasten back to the college and capture him before he gets wind of the fact that you have been found, Miss Marshfield," said Winslow.

"Yes, come on," said Parker.

They set out, and had they not been so greatly interested in their own conversation they might have seen a human being hurrying back away from the mouth of the cave. The boy, however,

was looking ahead of him, and he caught a glimpse of the figure.

"Thar goes ther feller now, I'll bet!" he cried.

"Where?" cried the young men in unison.

"Yonder," pointing.

The three leaped forward and made a thorough search, Winslow remaining with Miss Marshfield.

They did not find the fugitive, however, and they were inclined to think the boy may have imagined he saw some one. He insisted to the contrary, however.

"I seed 'im," he declared. "He wuz runnin' ter beat the band."

Winslow handed the boy the gold piece he had promised him.

"There you are," he said, "and we are much obliged besides."

"Thet's all right; thank ye, mister."

The boy stopped when they reached the village, and the others hurried onward.

When they reached the college Winnie hastened at once to her father's library and found him there.

When he saw his daughter, alive and well, he was overcome with joy, and he seized her in his arms and kissed her.

"Now tell me where you have been," he said, after they had both taken seats.

The girl did so, and when Professor Marshfield heard the story of Percy Silkwell's villainy he was very angry, as well as almost paralyzed with amazement because of the audacity of the student.

"I will have him arrested!" he cried.

But presently Denman and Winslow came to the library and they brought the news that Silkwell was not to be found in the college buildings or anywhere about the grounds.

"Then the boy must have been right," said Winnie; "that was Silkwell that he saw at the entrance to the cave as we were coming out."

"Undoubtedly," said Winslow; "and, professor, we are going in search of Silkwell at once—all the students."

"Thank you, Mr. Winslow; do this and bring him here a prisoner if you can."

"We will do our best, sir," and then, cheered and made happy by a flashing smile from Winnie's blue eyes, Winslow, accompanied by Denman, took his departure.

The students searched till the small hours of the morning, but found no traces of the villainous student, and returned to the college weary and disappointed.

"That's the last we will ever see of Percy Silkwell," said Parker to a number of the students, as they were about to disperse to their various rooms.

But he was mistaken.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Desperate Deed.

It was the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day.

The hour for the beginning of the third and deciding game of football between Wrightmore and Larchmount Colleges was almost at hand.

The first game had been played at Wrightmore,

the second at Larchmount, and now the third was to be played at Wrightmore.

It was a fine day, and an immense crowd was out.

Professor Marshfield and Winnie occupied the box in front of the grandstand seats, and the blue eyes of the beautiful girl were shining with eagerness and excitement.

"We'll win to-day; I just know we will," she murmured, "for Harry, the Halfback, is here and will surely play. Yes, we will win! We can't help winning!"

Her confidence in Harry Winslow was absolute, but she was not alone in feeling thus. All the players were confident that they would win, now that Harry was to play.

And indeed the majority of the students were resting perfectly easy, feeling sure that with Winslow in the game the Wrightmore eleven could not lose.

Harry, the Halfback, was there with the other players, and although he knew the way he was regarded by all, it did not give him the swell-head; in fact, there was not a more modest-appearing player among them than he.

The Larchmount players were on hand, and they pretended to feel confident of winning.

All the Larchmount students and all the sport-loving citizens of the village were there ready to render moral support to their team.

At last came the time for play, and as the players made their way to the gridiron, Harry, the Halfback's, eyes met those of Winnie Marshfield, and the smile and nod that the girl gave him made the youth feel like a giant. He felt capable of doing wonderful work.

"How do you feel, Harry?" asked Captain Westley, slapping the halfback on the shoulder.

"Fine as silk, Westley."

"Good! We'll win in a walk to-day."

"I hope so."

"I'm sure of it."

The players took their positions and the ball was given to Wrightmore.

At the sound of the whistle Hollowell, the big center, kicked off.

The ball was caught by one of the Larchmount players, and he came with a rush, and, with good interference, succeeded in bringing the ball back at least twenty-five yards.

Then he was downed, and a series of fierce scrimmages began.

The Larchmount players worked like demons, and in spite of all the Wrightmore players could do, the ball was forced up the field, the Larchmount gaining the necessary five yards in three downs each time, till they were within fifteen yards of their opponents' goal.

Then the Wrightmore players made a desperate stand, and succeeded in holding the Larchmount for downs, and thus secured the ball.

Then they began forcing their way back down the field, working with desperate energy and determination. Scrimmage after scrimmage took place to enable them to keep the ball.

Then they did some fine playing around the ends, and made splendid gains in this manner.

When the Larchmounts solved this play, the Wrightmores sent the ball through for eight yards on a flying wedge play.

Their splendid work caused great enthusiasm

among their adherents, and cheer after cheer went up.

Then the Wrightmore players returned to the work of smashing up the field in scrimmages, and at last, just a few minutes before the end of the half, they got the ball across the goal-line for a touchdown.

And then such a shout as went up! It could have been heard a mile.

The Wrightmore students and adherents cheered for at least three minutes steadily, and only ceased when they saw that Harry, the Halfback, was getting ready to try for goal.

He made the kick and sent the sphere between the posts, a beautiful goal.

And then the cheering was resumed, and the words, "Harry, the Halfback! Hurrah for Harry, the Halfback!" could be distinguished.

And the praise was justified, for Winslow had done Herculean work in the scrimmages and in the end plays.

Two minutes of play still remained in the half, and the players lined up and started again, but no score was made when the whistle blew.

The half ended with the score of 6 to 0, in favor of Wrightmore.

Winnie Marshfield was in the seventh heaven of happiness.

"Oh, papa, we're going to win!" she cried.

"It looks that way, Winnie," was the smiling reply.

"Yes, we can't lose with Harry, the Halfback, playing."

A sober look appeared on the professor's face for an instant, and he gave his daughter a quick, searching glance. Could it be possible that his daughter was in love with the handsome halfback? he mentally queried.

But, no, he decided; she was simply appreciative of the handsome halfback's good playing, that was all.

Presently the ten minutes' intermission was up, and the players came forth from their dressing-rooms.

Winnie's eyes were on Winslow, and as he came along their eyes met, and the girl waved her hand and gave the youth a bright smile.

He waved his hand and smiled in return, and just as he did so the sharp crack of a rifle rang out, and Harry gave utterance to a gasping groan and fell forward upon his face.

He had been stricken down by an assassin's bullet.

There was a moment of dead silence, and then cries of horror went up. And above all rang a shrill, piercing shriek from the lips of Winnie Marshfield. The next moment she had leaped from the box to the ground, and running to where the halfback lay, she knelt beside him, crying:

"Is he dead? Oh, tell me that he is not dead! He isn't dead! He can't be dead!"

Then the crowd caught sight of the person who had fired the shot. He had been lying on the sloping top of the dressing-room, and had leaped to the ground and was running away as fast as he could.

Scores of students recognized him, and on the air went up the cry:

"Silkwell! Silkwell did it!"

"Silkwell shot Harry, the Halfback!"

(To be continued.)

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

MOTHER-OF-PEARL FISHING

How the natives collect the shells in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden from which we get our mother-of-pearl is described in a report from Addison E. Southard, American Consul at Aden. About twenty men go out to the fishing beds in a sailing dhow and then divide up into rowboats, in which they search for likely spots, using a kerosene tin with one end filled with glass as a water telescope.

After locating the shells one of the fishermen removes his scant clothing, places a small clamp or plug to close his nostrils, and dives. As he descends a large basket is lowered, weighted with a stone to cause it to sink quickly. The diver works on the bottom, throwing the shells into the basket until he has filled it. He usually finds it necessary to come to the surface two or three times for a fresh breath before he has completed the filling of a basket. There are many sharks in the Red Sea and in the Gulf of Aden and when the divers are attacked they are fortunate if they escape minus a leg or an arm.

The shells vary from two inches to ten inches in diameter. After six or eight hours the shells are opened and the oysters eaten. When the dhow is laden she goes to Aden or Massowah and drives a bargain with the shell buyers. Just before the war the prevailing price was about 16 cents a pound; today it is only 8 cents. One large shipment to the United States was made last year. The Aden market supplies about 500,000 pearl shells a year.

DAY'S LENGTH VARIES

The earth is getting out of step with the music of the spheres, according to Dr. Innes, Director of the Union Observatory of South Africa, who announces the result of a series of investigations which appear to prove that the rate of the earth's rotation and consequently the length of the day is alternately diminishing and increasing slightly. This irregularity puts all clocks wrong and incidentally explains the old enigma of irregularities of the moon's motion.

The moon is generally ahead of or behind its predicted place, even if allowance is made for all

known sources of disturbances, a fact which has profoundly puzzled mathematicians the last two centuries. The late Prof. Newcomb suggested that the gain and loss were only apparent and that there was no fluctuation in the length of the day and consequently of the clocks.

When, however, he examined two hundred-year series of transits of Mercury he found no definite parallelism in the discrepancies in the movement of the two bodies. Dr. Innes has investigated much longer series of transits of Mercury, also eclipses of Jupiter's first satellite and discrepancies between observed and calculated places of the sun, and he finds all these run parallel with the moon, strong evidence that during the last forty years the earth's rotation, and hence the world's clocks, gained about thirty seconds.

If his findings are confirmed, they will go to explain the irregularity of the moon and will necessitate new precautions in time measurement and will create a new problem in case such large and rapid fluctuations occur.

LAUGHS

"When you finish your art studies, what is your chief ambition to draw?" "A nice big check on some bank."

Marcel—Do you know, Claude, chorus girls have a hard time? Claude—Yes, they do have to bare a great deal.

"Sarah, is your husband a good provider?" "Indeed, he is, ma'am, but I'm afraid he'll get caught at it."

He (at 7:30 p. m.)—Well, misery loves company, you know. She (stifling a yawn)—Not at this hour, I think.

"Can you think of any worse pest than the seven-year locusts?" "I should say so. Just think of a ten-year instalment purchase!"

"My wife sent me to buy a rolling pin," said the mild-looking man. "What kind of wood do you prefer?" inquired the salesman. "What is the softest wood you have?"

Medical Examiner—Suppose you should have a patient with some disease which you knew nothing about. What would you do? Student—Charge him five dollars for the examination, and then send him to you.

Young Jenkins (tremblingly)—I have—er—spoken to Mabel, Mr. Stentor, and she said—well—er—she said if I wished to press my suit I must see you. Mr. Stentor. She did, eh? Well, Mr. Jenkins, all I've got to say is this, that if you wish to press your suit you had better see a tailor. Goodday, sir.

St. Peter (at the heavenly portals)—Come in, young lady; there's plenty of room. Chicago Girl—Excuse me, but I want to ask one question. St. Peter—I am here for the purpose of answering the questions of newcomers. Chicago Girl—Well, then, would you mind telling me if you keep any ice cream soda-water in this place?

INTERESTING ARTICLES

RADIO WAVES REPLACE LIGHT BEAMS

This radio "lighthouse," at South Foreland, in England, warns mariners by sending out a sharply defined beam of wireless energy. The steel structure at the right is rotated once every two minutes, and as the wireless beam swings around the circle, it transmits a series of twenty-four different code calls—one for each fifteen degrees of arc. Thus a receiving ship can know in what direction the "lighthouse" lies by the type of signal received.

RETURNS WATCH AS GIFT.

Robert Craib, baker, Cambridge, Mass., received one New Year's present he did not expect. A week ago a valuable watch was taken from his street clothes which were hanging in his bakery. New Year's Day a man's voice on the telephone wished him the season's greetings and directed him to look on the window sill of the living room.

Craib did so and there found not only his watch but a package of cigarettes and a note of holiday cheer. Police say it's the strangest story they have ever heard.

HONEYMOON EXPRESS

The New York Central Railroad will start a honeymoon express service from New York to Niagara on the theory that brides and bridegrooms still yearn to have their pictures taken with Niagara Falls as a background. The train will be called "The Niagara" and will leave Grand Central Terminal every day at 8:35 p. m. It will reach Niagara at 8 a. m. The east bound train will leave Niagara at 8 p. m. and arrive here at 7:15 a. m.

The train will consist of nine Pullmans and a buffet car. There will be a bridal suite in each Pullman. The railroad plans to have train crews composed of men of exceptional courtesy.

DETROIT LOT COST PENNY

The site of Detroit's \$14,000,000 Book-Cadillac Hotel once sold for exactly one cent. The purchaser was Mary Watson Hudson, a citizen of Detroit, who obtained the plot of ground in accordance with an act of Congress.

It happened like this: In 1805 the town of Detroit was practically destroyed by fire. Many persons were wiped out of house and home. To aid the sufferers Congress made an arrangement by which they could, for a very small cash consideration, obtain Government land. Mary Watson Hudson bought this particular tract for one cent. Ten years after the lot was purchased by a speculator for \$150.

PRE-COLUMBIAN TOYS

Toys of the American Indian tribes never before exhibited have been placed on exhibition in the division of ethnology of the United States National Museum. These playthings of the papooses from Alaska to Mexico reveal that the redmen were efficient toy-makers and that their children found delight in the same imitation by their elders taken into consideration by the man-

ufacturers of our modern Christmas devices.

While little Indian girls, the exhibit shows, could not hug the talking, walking and sleeping dolls of our mechanical age, they did have plenty of dolls, with miniature teepees instead of doll houses, and little cradles to carry on their backs like the ones their mother carried them in when they were babies. Among these dolls is one of the tiny Eskimo which is a real stuffed wild duck for baby to play with.

Animal dolls were evidently very popular among the Indians. An ingenious beaver with a tail of leather marked in imitation of the big flat tail of the real beaver was made by an Arrapaho papa for his papoose. Cute little woolly buffaloes made out of different colored beads are shown. Miniature elk and targets cut in the shape of buffaloes for little Indian boys to shoot at are also shown.

There are horse dolls, and one doll is a tiny horse believed to have been made from the skin of an unborn colt on account of the lack of seams in the delicate hairy coat covering the little wooden image. These presents were sometimes exchanged when the families went visiting. The exhibit included material from Arrapahos, Shoshones, Hopi, Utes, Apaches, Cheyennes and other Indians.

MECHANICAL EYE

The cigar industry is using a machine which is almost uncanny in its "power of sight." It automatically sorts cigars according to the color of the wrapper, and can distinguish between thirty different shades of cigar wrappers, says Scientific American.

This mechanical "eye" is shaped like a small X-ray tube, with two terminals connected to a battery. One terminal is enlarged within the tube and heavily coated with potassium. The entire tube is covered by a light-proof case, and in the darkness no current flows between the two terminals. Light, however, activates the potassium-covered terminal, causing an emission of electrons which permits current to flow. The eye is simply an electric switch, opened and shut by light and darkness.

Below the eye is another chamber containing four small electric light bulbs, shielded from the tube above. When the automatic finger of the machine places the cigar in position within this lighted chamber, a shutter opens a slit in the covered tube-chamber above it, and only the light which is reflected from the wrapper of the cigar is permitted to act upon the tube.

Obviously, the darker the color of the cigar, the less light will be reflected upon the tube, and vice versa. The actual color of the cigar, then, determines the amount of current permitted to flow between the two terminals of the tube. And, since every color reflects a different amount of light, it is easily seen that the only limit to the color-sorting abilities of this machine lies in the minuteness with which these varying amounts of current, sent through the tube, can be detected and caused to operate the mechanical sorting apparatus.

GOOD READING

CHEAP FUEL FROM DUST

If you pump cornstarch with air into an enclosed tube and ignite the mixture with an electric spark it will explode. Recent Government experiments have shown in dust great explosive energy going to waste. It is this that is utilized in a new fuel announced recently, according to Popular Science Monthly.

Fuel made from dust or scourings not only will make use of waste material, but will reduce a big potential fire hazard in manufacturing plants, explains W. A. Noel, an engineer of the Bureau of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture. It would solve the problem of cheap fuel for factories, he adds, for it may be used in steam or gas engines.

Wood, metal, leathers, chemicals, cork, rubber, sugar, grain, cocoa and cinnamon are but a few of hundreds of products from which the inflammable dust may be obtained. Probably the most powerful of all dusts is that of aluminum while grain dusts are available in the greatest quantities.

ARE TORTOISES DEAF?

Either tortoises are deaf or else much less intelligent than generally supposed, according to a report of experiments made by Ryo Kuroda of the College of Nigata, Japan. In previous experiments with snakes, Kuroda found that most water snakes have no hearing ability, while land snakes often have an acute hearing. To further this work, it was decided to experiment with the tortoise, which is a more advanced member of the reptile family. An experimental group of several tortoises was used.

Scraps of meat, which is a favorite food, were laid upon a broad copper plate which was connected with an electrical circuit. When the experimental animal attempted to snap the meat from the plate, a bell was rung and at the same time an electric current passed through the plate, giving the animal a shock. If the animal were able to hear it would soon learn to associate the sound of the bell with the coming shock if the attempt to snap up the meat were made. Repeated trials with individual animals revealed no reaction to the bell sound associated with the electric shock. As a result the experimenter was led to the conclusion that the tortoise does not have a developed sense of hearing.

PEARLS FROM FISH SCALES DEFY DETECTION

Today fashion dictates pearls no matter what the occasion or the hour—necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all to be smart, must be pearls. And they are not the pearls that Fifth Avenue alone can afford to drape round its aristocratic white throat. Scientists, experimenting in their laboratories with test tubes and chemicals, have evolved a process by which evil-smelling fish scales are fashioned into lustrous pearls, glowing with iridescent beauty, and now we have a new

and rapidly prospering industry in the manufacture of artificial pearls.

The finished product is smooth, either pearly white or faintly pink, and defies detection. Because the competition between the American, French and Japanese manufacturers is keen, you may, if your taste runs that way, for a few dollars festoon strands and strands of these fish-scale pearls on your person.

The imitation pearl industry is but a scant ten years old, and if it had not been for the demoralization by the World War of the French essence d'Orient industry, America and Japan might never have entered the field as rivals of the French. "Essence d'Orient" is the fantastic name which the French, with their genius for that sort of thing, gave to the valuable lustrous lacquer obtained from the fish scales, and forming such an important part of the manufacture of artificial pearls.

The solid glass beads are coated with a lacquer, the pigment being crystalline guenan prepared from the silvery sheen of the fish scales. This lustrous substance is composed of small, pointed crystals, which when treated with various chemicals and strong ammonia, makes what is known as pearl essence.

The "indestructible" pearls are made of solid "opal" or "milk" glass beads which have been dipped into the pearl essence containing some gelatine, and then permitted to dry. A lacquer of pyroxylin or cellulose acetate is then applied to render the coating waterproof. Finishing touches are put on by polishing with a chamois skin and fine chalk. Then the beads are graded, sized and strung. The evolution of a foul-smelling fish scale!

In the selling of these, too, a new note has been introduced in merchandising articles for feminine adornment. The sidewalk merchant, with his wares looped on both arms, is a common sight and many a fastidious shopper has been unable to resist this clarion call.

The modish girl fetchingly cascades several strands of these erstwhile fish scales of varying size and length gracefully round her neck. She twines string after string around her wrists until the pearls form a deep cuff. Only then does she consider that she is well and completely dressed. And as soon would she appear in public without her shoes and stockings as without her "genuine imitation poils."

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BRIEF BUT POINTED

BOY FALLS AT NIAGARA BRINK, STRIKES LEDGE AND IS RESCUED

Robert Saunders, seven-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Saunders of Oakland, Cal., slipped while walking along the ice-covered runway leading from Goat Island to Terrapin Point, near the Horseshoe Falls, and went under the railing.

The boy fell about eight feet to a rocky ledge near the brink of the falls. His parents, who were with him, succeeded in getting him to safety. He was badly frightened but uninjured.

U. S. SAVINGS IN 1925 JUMPED BILLION DOLLARS

"The total for savings for 1925 again indicates a consistent growth in the thrift of the nation despite the tendencies of some adverse factors and the many avenues of investment open to the public," according to the Savings Bank Journal. "Approximately \$24,157,909,000 will be deposited to the credit of 45,561,916 persons at the close of the year according to a survey based on the reports of banking institutions to their State banking departments. The amount credited to each individual account will be in excess of \$529, establishing a new high mark. The total represents a gain of approximately \$1,000,000,000 over the figures for the close of business on June 30, 1925."

CLEANING MILK BOTTLES

In the City of New York about 1,000,000 milk and cream bottles are distributed every day, says Scientific American. Of these, 20 per cent. do not return; they are broken, thrown away, or are used for other purposes. That means that 800,000 bottles return daily to be washed.

How much do we pay for washing the returned bottles? Not much. A machine does it, and so many bottles are washed in a short time that the charge against any given bottle is very low. One of these machines can handle 250,000 bottles per day.

Internal sterilizing takes place at 210 degrees, Fahrenheit, practically the boiling point of water. There are no brushes; these would carry contamination from bottle to bottle. When the sterilizing has been done, the cooling water is applied to the outside of the bottle only, and not to the inside which has just been sterilized. Even the carrying cups, into which the bottles are inserted at the beginning, are designed in such a manner that water cannot adhere to the lips of the bottles and thus possibly carry over contamination.

RICHEST PUBLIC INSTITUTION

With the bequest of Frank A. Munsey, estimated at between \$25,000,000 and \$40,000,000, the Metropolitan Museum of Art will become the world's wealthiest public institution, it was estimated last night by Edward Robinson, director of the museum.

Although detailed figures were not available, Mr. Robinson placed the previous large contributions at between \$40,000,000 and \$50,000,000, including cash gifts, art collections, and the Barnard Cloisters in Washington Heights, recently donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Adding to this the Munsey bequest, the cash on hand and the investment fund of the institution, the total would reach into the hundred million, Robinson believes.

"But," he added significantly. "We have no estimate of the contents of the museum—aside from the collections contributed—or of the building and the land, donated by the city. These certainly would run into millions, if not tens of millions!"

Among the previous gifts to the museum, taken into consideration by Robinson in his estimate, are the following:

J. Pierpont Morgan, art collections and building fund, \$16,000,000; Collis P. Huntington, art collection, \$2,500,000; Francis L. Leland, \$1,000,000; Jacob H. Rogers \$6,500,000; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., cash and land, \$2,000,000; William K. Vanderbilt, paintings, \$1,500,000; William H. Riggs, armor collection \$1,000,000; Mrs. Stephen V. Harkness, \$1,000,000; George F. Baker, \$1,000,000; Isaac D. Fletcher, art collection and residue of estate, \$3,000,000, and Benjamin D. Altman, art collection and maintenance fund, \$10,250,000.

CHASING SUN OVER TOP OF WORLD

To pursue the sun across the top of the world is one of the expectations of the Detroit Aviation Society's Arctic airplane expedition, when it takes off from Point Barrow, Alaska, next March.

"From the time we take off at Point Barrow, we will never lose sight of the sun," said Captain George H. Wilkins, leader of the venture, upon his arrival here today. "If we start in the morning from Point Barrow and keep on flying, we should reach the geographic pole at midnight. The sun at that time will just about touch the horizon and immediately begin to rise again. We will lose twelve hours in that instant when we cross the North Pole. In other words, it will be both morning and afternoon. The sun at that time of the year will never be higher than 12 degrees."

The take-off from Point Barrow is scheduled for March 21. Captain Wilkins said he had every reason to believe land will be discovered in the unexplored region between Point Barrow and the "ice pole." Should this prove true, he added, he would return to Point Barrow without landing on the initial flight, report the discovery and, accompanied by a second plane, go back to explore and map the new territory.

If no land is sighted, he said, he would endeavor on the initial flight to fly over the top of the world to Spitzbergen, approximately 2,100 miles from Point Barrow.

Ben Eielson, formerly a mail pilot in Alaska, will be in charge of one of the two Fokker planes of the expedition.

CURRENT NEWS

SEAWEED IS DINNER DELICACY IN JAPAN

Seaweed in Japan is a dinner delicacy—for the Japanese. In fact, the harvesting of seaweed is one of Japan's large industries.

Of the many species of the weed, gathered from the bottom of the sea, the Japanese Tangle (*Laminaria Japonica*) is most popular because of its flavor and refreshing taste. This weed grows abundantly in the cold seas off Hokkaido and is harvested during the summer months. The yearly harvest off Hokkaido alone is estimated at 200,000,000 pounds.

While this seaweed is relatively cheap, food chemists claim it is very nutritious and contains much "vitamine A," the food element lacking in polished rice.

DUST IN AIR REACHES MANY MILLIONS OF TONS

Winds charge the atmosphere with millions of tons of dust every year, and it is often carried to great distances before it settles to the earth.

Many instruments have been devised for counting the number of dust particles in samples of air.

Some rather startling statements are heard, as, for example, that a cigarette smoker sends 4,000,000,000 particles into the air with every puff.

What this instrument actually counted was the nuclei about which condensation occurred in the forming of an artificial fog, writes C. F. Talman of the Weather Bureau. It now seems probable that a large proportion of these nuclei were too minute to deserve the name of "dust," most of them being far beyond the range of the microscope, and many, perhaps, individual gas molecules.

BELATED MAIL

Ten years ago Moisiej Pus sent a \$100 international money order to his relative, Charbyona Pus, in Russia, and last month the remittance was delivered to the Pus family, the Post Office Department announced.

The money order was sent from Endicott, N. Y., but before it reached its destination, Merwa, Russia, the revolution had made evacuation of the town necessary. The Russian Government lost track of Sharbyona Pus and the order was returned to this country, but wrote the Department that Moisiej Pus the sender in the meantime had left the country.

The Polish Government last month complained his money order never had materialized. The authorization promptly was identified and dispatched to Poland, where the Pus family now resides.

EVEN CHAIRS CLAD IN SCANT GARB

The pronounced reduction in the amount of clothing that women wear today is nothing less than a tragedy for English manufacturers of worsteds, who frankly admit, in their pleas to Parliament for protective tariffs, that the new styles have meant serious loss for them.

But it is not the new women's styles alone that

cause hardship for the makers of fabrics. Houses also are going "decollete" summer and winter, in contrast to the heavily curtained and draped homes of the Victorian age. Ponderous draperies are passing. There are not nearly so many stuffed chairs and sofas. With their long skirts, women are abandoning also dust-catching fabrics of all kinds in the home and thus are simplifying house-keeping.

Nor are men wearing as many worsteds as formerly, the manufacturers complain. There are no more shawls for old men, for men, imitating women, refuse to get old. In many ways this age uses fewer clothes than its predecessors. Formal entertaining is less general. People go to the theatre in business clothes, and even refuse to dress for dinner.

NEW YORK CITY'S BIGGEST FLAGPOLE

Mention was made in the Sun the other day of the arrival in Hoboken of a flagpole 165 feet long, which Joseph T. Lilly, president of the Norton-Lilly Steamship Company, intended to set up at his country home in Northport, L. I. Four large flat cars were used to carry what it is said will be the tallest flagpole along the Atlantic coast from the place where it was found near Tacoma, Wash.

Mr. Lilly is proud of his new flagpole, and well he may be in view of the time, trouble and money expended before the right piece of timber was found. The search for it took two months. It was taken from the virgin forest, and the tree, an Oregon fir, from which it was shaped, was 300 feet high. Besides being beautifully grained, the pole possesses the added distinction of not having a knot on one side of it.

A pole of such height requires a big flag, and Mr. Lilly ordered one 30 by 50 feet. The height of the pole and the size of the flag would be sufficient to enable Old Glory to be seen miles away, but the site of the flagpole on a hill 200 feet above the sea level adds to its conspicuousness.

So much for Mr. Lilly's flagpole. It appears to be the tallest in this vicinity. But there is one staff that runs a close second to Mr. Lilly's. It is the flagpole in Battery Park.

The Manhattan pole is 109 feet long, but only 100 feet of it shows above ground. Its height is, however, increased by the addition of a topmast, the combined height of the pole and topmast being 156 feet. The size of the New York flag excels. That on the Battery pole is 40 by 60 feet, each strip being a yard wide.

The Battery flagpole is of further interest because it was originally the mast of the cup defender Constitution, built to race the Shamrock II. When the yacht was sold by the syndicate which built her to a New York firm to be broken up the city bought the topmast and foot base for \$600.

The weight of the great pole is 5,000 pounds, while the topmast weighs approximately 800 pounds. The diameter of the pole at the foot is 22 1-8 inches, while at the top it is 14 1-2 inches. The diameter of the topmast at the foot is 12 inches and at the top 3 1-2 inches.

FROM EVERYWHERE

SUBMARINE CAN STAY UNDER WATER TWO AND ONE-HALF DAYS

Constructed at a cost of nearly \$4,500,000, this British submarine "X-1" can remain submerged two and one-half days at a time. It can make a voyage of 20,000 miles. The underseas dreadnought can turn in its own length—350 feet—and carries a crew of 121 men.

WALTZ MUSIC POPULAR AGAIN WITH LONDONERS

The old-fashioned waltz is slowly coming into vogue again. One of the biggest talking machine distributing agencies says three waltz records were among the ten most popular dance tune records sold during the last quarter.

It is asserted in dancing circles that the tango has failed to appeal to the "man in the street," and that the popularity of waltz music points to a definite revival of the old-fashioned waltz.

HUNTERS WILL USE AUTOS

Many of the big game hunters who are going from England to Africa this winter will use motor cars to hunt in the deserts and along the edges of the jungles.

Among the first to leave for the season's sport were Sir John and Lady Harrington, who will start from Khartoum for an expedition in the wilds of the White Nile country. Sir John knows the Sudan well, as does Lady Harrington, who was formerly Miss Amy MacMillan, an heiress of Detroit.

Sir John was the first Englishman to travel to Abyssinia by way of Khartoum. He became British Minister to the Court of Ethiopia and a little later was knighted by King Edward VII.

HOLDS UP HIS OWN FATHER

Charged with holding up his own father at the point of a revolver in an attempt to rob him of a \$400 payroll for coal shovelers at the B. & A. roundhouse, Worcester, Mass., Louis Paquette, 17 years old, was arraigned in District Court with a pal, Orlando Guiti, 16. After entering pleas of not guilty the couple were held in bonds of \$2,100 for a continued hearing.

The attempted hold-up of the paymaster, Joseph E. Paquette, followed the stealing of an automobile owned by Max Sobel in which the boys intended to make their getaway. According to the police, young Paquette confessed.

Covering their faces with handkerchiefs, the boys held up Paquette and demanded the money, when he refused to give it, his son fired a shot at him from the revolver. Frightened at the approach of pedestrians, the boys jumped into the machine and drove away.

FIND "CANAL BUILDER'S" SKELETON IN ARIZONA

The skeleton of a man, believed to have been a member of the race said by some archaeologists to have inhabited this section of Arizona 2,000 years ago, was unearthed the other day near the

eastern city limits by a party of excavators working under the direction of the American Museum of Natural History.

Measurements of the skeleton indicate the man was about 5 feet 8 inches tall. Erick Smith, in charge of the excavating work, and Dr. O. A. Turney, Phoenix archaeologist, said the man undoubtedly was a member of the race that was known as the "Canal Builders," who are believed to have constructed the first irrigation system in the Salt River Valley. Traces of these canal systems still remain.

Belief was expressed that there were two rooms beneath the chamber in which the skeleton was found. Doctor Turney explained it was the custom of this race to lay their dead on the floor of a room, cover the floor with earth, build a new floor and continue to live in the same dwelling.

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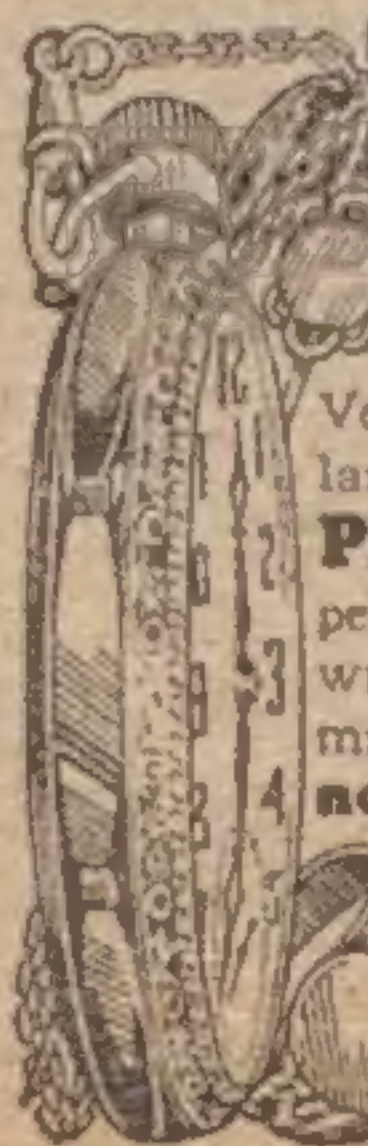
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